

# Exile in Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid*

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*Fig : A Portrait of Ameen Rihani*

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Amani JEBALI

*Wilt thou take it? The hand of a personified illusion,  
Of an exiled dream,  
Of an Oriental who makes himself thy guest?*

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*Ameen Rihani  
Myrtle and Myrrh, 1905.*

The abbreviations used in this research to refer to Rihani's literary works are the following:

*Khalid*: Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. New York. 1911.

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## *Abstract*

In this research, I intended to focus on Ethnic American literature. Among the Hispanic-American, African-American, or Jewish-American communities, there is also one that thrived into the American society and produced its own exceptional literary creations. Indeed, I am taking into consideration the Arab-American populace as one of the important components of the American cosmopolitan society. Arab-Americans traveled from the Levant to the United States in search for peace and in order to escape all of the religious and political persecutions that ravaged the Arab world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the disgraceful violations of tyrannical powers. Crossing seas, abandoning families, and leaving behind a life and a home was not an option nor a choice for these newcomers. They saw in the United States a place where their troubles would come to an end, and where their self-respect can be restored through work. Arab- American settlers brought to life their artistic fervor, their music, and their literature. The latter first started to thrive in the early Twentieth Century. It created a captivating mixture between the American and Arab cultures. In fact, each ethnic community has its memories, and still survives thanks to its original heritage; and each category still breathes in the remnants of its initial homeland. That is why I chose to introduce and understand one of the major Arab-American literary productions, whether in volume, form, or theme. Thus, in this thesis, my focal point will be *The Book of Khalid*, by Lebanese-American writer Ameen Rihani, who belongs to the first wave of Arab-



American immigrants –started in 1880 and ended in 1924--. This book was first published in New York in 1911 and was initially received by an American readership. Although it examined both Arab and American concerns through its archaic English embroidered by some terms in the Arabic language reflecting Arab concerns, it mostly handled the journey of a certain Lebanese Khalid, who travels to America, and then comes back to Greater Syria in a futile attempt to connect his Levant to his New York, and to link the skyscrapers to the Cedars. The book’s structure is quite intricate and unique. Indeed, it is divided into three books: To Man, to Nature, and to God. It is also introduced as a lost manuscript in a library in Cairo by the narrator. The reader is told that an Editor weaved its lost pieces to make a coherent story. Within *the Book of Khalid*, a testimony from his long-time friend Shakib entitled the *Histoire Intime* is included to bolster the events in Khalid’s life. Finally, the Editor of the book—to reinforce his criticism-- does not hesitate to give his own personal opinion about Khalid’s experiences and different adventures. Rihani’s *Khalid* is also characterized by humour and satire. It is also highly poetical and fraught with references to poets, philosophers, and historical places. Thus, this research will analyze the physical and mental exile of the protagonist along with its political and religious manifestations, essentially on the intellectual level. Exile was distinctly destructive and emotionally deteriorating, especially for Khalid, who incarnated Rihani’s own image of a writer and philosopher who relentlessly fought to enlighten the two peoples and pave for them a way for fruitful communication rather than for a clash. Thus, Rihani, in this book, created Khalid to explain his vision of a world where perpetual exile is the fate of a Lebanese-American, unless the “West” and the “East” are fused together in an attempt at destroying invisible barriers and at building a universal home where humanity is each person’s motto.

# Introduction

## 1. Arab American Literature:

The American literary scene was always characterized by the pervading existence of ethnic literatures. Indeed, the variety of Americans' ethnic origins defined the social context of the United States. As a consequence, literature emerged in order to voice each American social category. As a matter of fact, Arab American Literature, although not much heard of, flourished in a time where Arabs, especially from the Middle East, or Levantine Arabs, escaped their original territories and fled their colonized homeland in the early twentieth century in order to reach out to opportunities in the New World: The land of promise and hope, The United States of America. According to Carol Fadda-Conrey, "A large part of this population hails from the Levant area, which encompasses Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Palestine"<sup>1</sup>. The history of Arab American literary production first commenced with the arrival of the first wave immigrants to the United States in the late nineteenth century, who were mostly peddlers and who struggled to engage into the American social atmosphere at their arrival. In fact, they generally sold religious relics to people claiming that their commodities were genuine and authentic in order to acquire credibility and gain Americans' respect. One of the books that portrayed in detail the reasons why immigrant Levantines called for their right to be accepted and to be integrated into the American society was *The Syrian Christ*, by Lebanese author Abraham Rihbany. He insisted that Jesus Christ, as being originally Jesus of Nazareth, is one of these Syrians, and as a result, Arab Americans deserve to be respected and welcomed for they are the people who are originated from where Jesus first saw the light. Indeed, Rihbany writes:

My more modest purpose in this writing is to remind the reader that, whatever else Jesus was, as regards his modes of thought and life and his method of teaching, he was a Syrian of the Syrians. According to authentic history, Jesus never saw any other country than Palestine. There he was born; there he grew up to manhood, taught his

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<sup>1</sup> Fadda-Conrey, Carol. *Contemporary Arab- American Literature*, New York University Press, New York, 2014, p .12.

Gospel, and died for it.<sup>2</sup>

Contrarily to the modern-day geo-political divisions in the Middle East, Palestine was only a province taking part of a larger geographical area, before the Great War, called Greater Syria which is part of the Ottoman Empire.

This first wave “consisted mostly of Christians from the provinces of Syria”<sup>3</sup>. The focus in this dissertation will be mainly on these first wave immigrants since the book we are analyzing, *The Book of Khalid* by Ameen Rihani, was produced by one of the early Christian Lebanese immigrants to the United States. First of all, defining the term “Arab-American” basically implies that such a person would be in direct contact with both origins. That is, that he or she holds simultaneously both Western and Eastern identities and presents himself or herself as the result of the fusion of both American and Levantine characters. As for Arab-American Literature, Steven Salaita defines it simply as such:

So what is Arab American Literature? I will be honest and confess that, despite my devotion to Arab American Literature, I do not really know how to answer this question in a straightforward way [...] Arab American Literature consists of creative work produced by American authors of Arab origin and that participates, in a conscious way or through a critical reception, in a category that has come to be known as “Arab American literature”.<sup>4</sup>

In his definition, Salaita only focuses on the ethnic origins of an Arab American writer. However, he still continues to provide another more specific explanation of what an Arab American literature should be or what it should encompass. Therefore, he writes:

You will encounter numerous styles and aesthetics, many of which can be found in other American literary traditions. You will also encounter some themes recurrent in those traditions: immigration, assimilation, racism, marginalization, return to origin, and so forth. Some themes appear to be specific to Arab American fiction, though ...”<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, Salaita relates his understanding of Arab American Literature to that of other American ethnic literatures that generally feature ideas such as nostalgia, belonging, psychological exile, and longing for one’s roots. These Arab American writers embody those sentiments of alienation and solitude on paper to finally exteriorize the voice and the

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<sup>2</sup> Rihbany, Abraham Mitrie. *The Syrian Christ.*, London: Melrose, London, 1919, p. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Fadda-Conrey, Carol, *Contemporary Arab –American Literature*, New York University Press, New York, 2014, p12.

<sup>4</sup> Salaita, Steven. *Modern Arab American Fiction, A Reader’s Guide*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2011, p 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid* p.7.

needs of the Arab American community. For example, a poem by one of the founding fathers of Arab American literature, Khalil Gibran, written in 1920, exhibits passion, attachment, and deep-seated faith and confidence in his homeland Lebanon. In this poem, he establishes his own individual perception of what is called home. Indeed, he regards his Lebanon as a nation where no political divisions or sectarian conflicts exist, and where the vision of a rural country dominates. Gibran also describes his own version of his homeland. He contrasts it to others' viewpoints for they regard their country as an arena for destruction, neglect, and egoism, whereas the poet diffuses his connection and affinity with a land where only dreams and optimism reign. He perceives it as a land where humility and simplicity are primordial humane values by which the memory and soil of the country can achieve immortality. Thus, Khalil Gibran describes his Lebanon as such:

You have your Lebanon and I have mine.

You have your Lebanon with her problems, and I have my Lebanon with her beauty. You have your Lebanon with all her prejudices and struggles, and I have my Lebanon with all her dreams and securities.

Your Lebanon is a political knot, a national dilemma, a place of conflict and deception. My Lebanon is a place of beauty and dreams of enchanting valleys and splendid mountains.

Your Lebanon is inhabited by functionaries, officers, politicians, committees, and factions. My Lebanon is for peasants, shepherds, young boys and girls, parents and poets. Your Lebanon is empty and fleeting, whereas My Lebanon will endure forever.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, in their book entitled *Multicultural Writers from Antiquity to 1945: a Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, another definition of Arab American literature is provided by Alba Della Fazia Amoia and Bettina Liebowitz Knapp who write that Ameen Albert Rihani, a University professor, believes that Arab American Literature is "Arab in its concerns...English in language, and American in spirit and platform."<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the poet Khalil Gibran, An Arab American himself, expresses his whole-hearted belonging to his land by highlighting his enlightened and hopeful view of his country and, at the same time, discarding a gloomy and somber perception of a colonized Lebanon tarnished by blood. Adapting a relatively joyful and peaceful approach in

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<sup>6</sup>Hyndman- Rizk, Nelia. "Return to Hadchit: The Virtual, Spiritual and Temporal Dimensions of Pilgrimage to a Lebanese Mountain Village." In Nelia Hyndman- Rizk (Ed), *Pilgrimage in the Age of Globalization: Constructions of the Sacred and Secular in Late Modernity*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. United Kingdom. 2012. p. 176.

<sup>7</sup>Amoia, Alba Della Fazia, & Bettina Liebowitz Knapp. *Multicultural Writers from Antiquity to 1945: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*. Greenwood Publishing Group. Connecticut. 2002. P.8.

portraying the country is considered to be one of the many themes of the Arab American literary tradition. Khalil Gibran was one of the early founders of *Al Rabita'a Al Qalamiya* -in the Arabic language - or to what is known as, when translated into the English language, The American Pen League. It was mainly composed of a group of Christian Lebanese- American intellectuals who gathered in New York and sought to lay the foundations of an Arab -American literature. They were also called *Al Mahjar* group or what is meant to be the group of émigrés. In an afterword by Todd Fine, in which he familiarizes readers with Ameen Rihani, the author of *The Book of Khalid*, he introduces the Pen League:

This group included a number of writers--among them Elia Abu Madi, Mikhail Naimy, and Nasib Arifa—who are still read in the Arab World today. Believing that Arabic literature required fresh themes and forms, they established a literary society known as “The Pen League” (*Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyah*), which set out “to lift Arabic literature from the quagmire of stagnation and imitation, and to infuse a new life into its veins so as to make of it an active force in the building up of the Arab nations.”<sup>8</sup>

As Arabic-speaking immigrants, and also United States citizenship holders, the members of the Pen League ventured to revolutionize Arabic literature and save it from redundancy and oblivion. Therefore, before delving into the creation of a new Arab American literary trend, their ultimate goal was always to seek to incorporate their original Levantine and Arab identity in their literary productions. In fact, in *The Book of Khalid: A Critical Edition Edited by Todd Fine*, Geoffrey Nash writes that Philip Hitti, a professor of Semitic literature, explains that immigrant Syrians in the United States preserved their Arab identity and they would have never accepted its loss or disappearance amidst the new American values, they were about to discover and eventually accept, at the time. Fine writes what Hitti advances his opinion concerning the identity of Arab Americans: “Nevertheless, Philip Hitti opined “The modern Syrian clings to [Arabic] and is proud of its richness and efficacy as a medium of thought”, so much so that he “exercises the leadership of thought through the use of the printed and spoken Arabic word.”<sup>9</sup>

As a conclusion , Arab American literature thrived as a hybrid type of literature for it combines both Eastern and Arab themes expressed in English and meant for the wider

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<sup>8</sup> Rihani, Ameen. , *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co, New York, 2012 , p.320

<sup>9</sup> Rihani, Ameen. Todd Fine (Ed) In *the Book of Khalid: A Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press. New York. 2016. P.261.

American and Arab readership. It is, indeed, the amalgamation of the Pen League's desire to reconcile between Lebanese origins and the new American identity and values, along with the eagerness of these writers to voice their state of in-betweenness. Therefore, this literature is a reflection of the Eastern conscience on an American language and landscape, and vice versa.

## 2. *Al Nahda* or the Arab Renaissance:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Arab world; that is the geographical area extending from modern day Iraq in the East to Morocco in the West, witnessed a remarkable, yet brief cultural revival and awakening which first started in Egypt. This renaissance mainly targeted culture, and its initiators sometimes ventured to reform the Islamic religion. Its participants sought to introduce change whether on the intellectual level by producing a revolution-oriented literature, or by familiarizing Arab societies with Western thinking and social context in order for Eastern nations to achieve the level of modernity and advancement European countries have already attained. Indeed, the context of *Al Nahda* is significant in this research for it was influential on Rihani especially that this movement arose to lift Arab countries from the abyss of Ottoman control and Turkish domination, which was one of Rihani's cherished ambitions. In her book, Nijmeh Hajjar writes that according to: "Rihani's vision, the Arab nation is one that survived a harsh natural environment and centuries of ignorance and oppression, and was still striving for freedom, independence, national sovereignty, and unity like every civilized nation."<sup>10</sup>

In "The Rise of Arab-American Literature : Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani" , Wail S .Hassan stresses the fact that Egypt was the country whose ruler Muhammad Ali was among the first leaders who aspired to have their Eastern nation resemble in development and evolution the European countries, especially in terms of grasping knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, he writes:

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<sup>10</sup> Hajjar, Nijmeh. *The Politics and Poetics of Ameen Rihani: The Humanist Ideology of An Arab-American Intellectual and Activist*. I.B.Tauris. New York. 2010.p.229

<sup>11</sup> Hassan, Wail S. "The Rise of Arab-American Literature: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani". *American Literary History* 2008. P. 246.

It became all too clear to Egypt's ruler Muhammad Ali (1805-48) that Europe's strength was the result of modern scientific knowledge, and it was in the interests of acquiring that knowledge that he began sending educational missions to France in the 1820s. In 1831, an Egyptian Islamic scholar named Rifa'a al-Tahtawi returned from one such mission in Paris to establish a school for translation that aimed at disseminating modern European science and ideas. The core of *Nahda* reformism was selective appropriation of those modern European ideas, sciences, and institutions that would strengthen Arab societies.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the Arab Renaissance is understood as a period of Arab enlightenment and transcendence towards the levels of knowledge, awareness, and intellectual innovation. It is accepted by scholars to be a short period of time in the history of the Middle East, where cultural revival emerged as the result to some scholars' voyages to Europe such as the case of *Khaireddine Pasha's* brief yet enlightening travel to France. As a matter of fact, Boutros Hallaq, a Lebanese literary scholar, in an interview with Abdellah Taia, states that:

Cette *Nahda*, ("renaissance", "réveil") s'oppose à la période précédente qualifiée d' « Inhitat » (« décadence »), qui a duré quatre siècles. Pour saisir toute l'ambiguïté de cette appellation, il faudrait la rapporter à la notion européenne de « Moyen Âge », longtemps qualifiée de période décadente.<sup>13</sup>

Hallaq, thus, explains that this "*Inhitat*", which almost means the Arabic word for decadence, was a period in which culture, knowledge, and literary productions were not endowed with renovation, and were ignored. This led to a general belatedness and a lack of progress within the Eastern Arab nations in contrast to the West.

Therefore, this intellectual awakening was substantial for some of the members of the Pen League, especially for Rihani, for "many of them were outspoken in their criticism of the Ottomans and of social conditions back home."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, they denounced the dependence and "especially religious superstition and the power of the clergy"<sup>15</sup> that were hindering the growth of critical thinking and oppressing intellectuals because of their superstition and irrational attachment to tradition. As a conclusion, *Al Nahda represented* a historical context that framed Rihani's perceptions of the world and encouraged him to

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Boulouque, Clémence. Floray, Stéphanie, and Taia, Abdellah (2007) « La Littérature Arabe Moderne 1800-1945 » *Transfuge* .p .60.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* p.247.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

emphasize the importance of freedom and independence whether in his writings or in his conception of the world.

### 3. Greater Syria and Maronite Christians:

#### 3.1. Greater Syria:

During the period of Ottoman colonization of *Bilad Al Sham* or the region of the Fertile Crescent, the notion of Greater Syria was prevalent. Contrarily to the situation of that geographical area nowadays, the territory, before the end of World War I, used to be a single province gathering modern day Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. Indeed, before 1918, and before the implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement's provisions which ended up dividing the area into small territories, all people residing in *Bilad Al Sham* were referred to as Syrians. This definition justifies the context of *The Book of Khalid*, and illustrates the political and geographical situation both the author and the protagonist used to live in. To provide a more specified definition of the term "Greater Syria", B. H Dening writes:

Thus the area which will be referred to as Greater Syria consists of those lands now divided between the Republics of Syria and the Lebanon, and the Kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan. Strictly speaking, it also includes the ex-Mandate of Palestine, but the problems of that unfortunate piece of territory are so great that it would be confusing to consider it in the present study.<sup>16</sup>

The Fertile Crescent was, and still is, the homeland for different "Easterners" of different religious backgrounds. Indeed, some of those who ethnically refer to themselves as Assyrian or Chaldean are generally Christians. Moreover, Alixa Naff writes that "Throughout the seven hundred years of Greco-Roman rule, Syria retained its Semitic character [...] Syriac -a Semitic language-, survived in the countryside."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Syriac – Aramaic is the native tongue of indigenous Syrians. Moreover, the context of a Greater Syria meant Unity, solidarity, and interconnection among all Syrians which represent essential and vital signs proving the power of a nation according to Rihani. For instance, in his poem "A Chant of Mystics", he celebrates union and oneness: "O, come to the

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<sup>16</sup> Dening, B. H. « Greater Syria: a Study in Political Geography ». *Geography* (1950).P.110.

<sup>17</sup> Naff, Alixa. *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. SIU Press, 1993. P.23.



Banquet of Union and taste of the ecstasy.”<sup>18</sup> he writes. That is why it must be mentioned that the author of *the Book of Khalid* was an anti-Zionist. In fact, as Zionism is defined by Encyclopedia Britannica as a “Jewish nationalist movement that has had as its goal the creation and support of a Jewish national state in Palestine, the ancient homeland of the Jews.”<sup>19</sup>, Rihani felt that this movement was to be considered as a threat to his country for it promised colonization ,the displacement of its inhabitants at the time ,and the introduction of non-Palestinians or Syrians -who were not prepared to coexist with others- into the land. This engenders destabilizing the country’s political sphere and especially, dividing the large portion of land into small territories .These future colonies would be characterized by a lack of autonomy, a relatively weak political authority, and the absence of security on both the international and the local levels.

As *The Book of Khalid* is written by Ameen Rihani, A Maronite Lebanese, it would probably clarify the author and the protagonist’s stances and views about life, politics, and religious beliefs if a thorough understanding of Maronites is provided.

### 3.2. Maronite Christians:

This Christian population first appeared in the Levant. Today, the largest Arab Maronite community mainly exists in Lebanon. This group belongs to the Maronite church and is self-governed by the Patriarch of Antioch. Maronite Christians mainly refer to Saint Maron or *Mar Maroun* as their teacher. Boutros Gemayel, in his book entitled *The Virgin Mary in the Maronite Church*, explains the origins of the Maronite belief:

The Maronite Church emerged with Saint Maron and the Monastery of Saint Maron in the fifth century, but “Maronite Christianity” [...] Christians who became Maronites, existed prior to this date. They are the Christians of the Church of Antioch who received the Good News from the apostles and the head of the apostles himself. Antioch is the original Church, the “City of God,” in which they were first called “Christians”.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems Edited by S.B.Bushrui and J. M. Munro*. The Rihani House, 1970. P 104-105.

<sup>19</sup> *Zionism, Nationalistic Movement*. Encyclopedia Britannica.  
<<https://global.britannica.com/topic/Zionism>>

<sup>20</sup> Gemayel, Boutros. *The Virgin Mary in the Maronite Church*. Paulist Press, 2009. p.8.

Gemayel continues to specify who the Maronites of the Church of Antioch were. Indeed, he explains that they were the ones who supported “the Council of Chalcedon”<sup>21</sup>. Thus, “The Maronites were among the supporters of the Council who were called Chalcedonians.”<sup>22</sup> . As far as their main beliefs are concerned, Gemayel insists that Maronites believe in the Doctrine of the Eucharist or what is referred to as Transubstantiation. In fact, he writes that: “This is what a Maronite breathes at each offering of incense and prayer! At each candle and Eucharist! Every time his mouth opens to speak, he proclaims “true God from true God”. “By the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary”.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, The Maronites believe in the nature of Christ as both a divine entity and a man, as well as—evidently-- the Holy Trinity. Since the first wave of Arab American immigrants to the United States was basically composed of Arab Christians, among them the Maronites, and since the two major Arab American literary figures – Gibran and Rihani – were brought up as Maronite Lebanese, their religious background was apparent in their writings. For instance, Suheil Bushrui asserts that: “One of the most striking features of *The Prophet* is its biblical language, which Gibran rightly saw as the ideal medium for conveying profound percepts capable of being understood and digested.”<sup>24</sup> Indeed, in *The Prophet*, a book written By Khalil Gibran in 1923, the writer’s biblical influence is quite embodied in the text. For example, in a section entitled “On Crime and Punishment”, Gibran seems to remind the readers of the consequences of forgetting one’s human nature; that is the paradoxical innate nature through which a person discovers that he or she possesses both the seeds of goodness and evil. Indeed, he reminds them to remember their sins, those who always punish “in the name of righteousness”, and to never randomly judge a person based only on his or her evil actions, for every human being is an amalgam of both : “And if any of you would punish in the name of righteousness and lay the axe unto the evil tree, let him see to his roots; And verily he will find the roots of the good and the bad, the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined together in the silent heart of the earth. And you judges who would be just [...]”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* p.11.

<sup>24</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet, A new Annotated Edition*, Oneworld Publications.2012 .p. xxvi. (Original published in 1923).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p 42.

Gibran's language is blatantly biblical for it appears instructive and takes the form of general truths that are not to be questioned, and should be, therefore, followed as they are. Besides, Geoffrey Nash writes in *The Book of Khalid, A Critical Edition*, by quoting Gibran and Rihani, that: "Rihani and Gibran had much in common: "the mutual admiration between the men grew from the similarity of their Maronite backgrounds"<sup>26</sup>. Indeed, both men were inspired by their Christian backgrounds to produce both *The Book of Khalid* and *The Prophet*.

As a conclusion, the members of *Al Mahjar* group, especially Rihani and Gibran, espoused religious thinking derived from their Christian upbringing. Yet, they adhered to a more global, universal, and humanistic vision of humanity and life. In fact, although the biblically-inspired writings are straightforward, at times, such as the case for Gibran, they are not always applicable to Rihani's thinking. In his poem "A chant of Mystics", the poet describes a world where people are united by their human nature and are not defined nor reduced to a belittling representation only based on the religious affiliations they belong to. On the contrary, Rihani introduces his readers to a world where humans are only differentiated according to their actions and to the ways they interact with each other. For Rihani, the most important vision of humanity must be not rather religious, but more expanded and based upon the human intellect that is already a common denominator among all peoples. For example, Rihani writes:

Nor Crescent nor Cross we adore;  
Nor Buddha, nor Christ we implore;  
Nor Muslim Nor Jew we abhor;  
We are free.

We are not of Iran or of Ind,  
We are not of Arabia or of Sind:  
We are free.

We are not of the East or the West;  
No boundaries exist in our breast:  
We are free.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid: A Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press, 2016. p262

<sup>27</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*, James T. White and Co, New York , 1921 .p.84

Ameen Al Rihani disregards sectarianism-especially that he comes from a land where religious sects and different communities live together, and adopts a more comprehensive, broad, and cosmopolitan vision of humanity. His thought is incarnated in the personality of Khalid, the protagonist of his Magnum Opus, and first Arab American literary and philosophical novel to ever be written by an Arab: *The Book of Khalid*.

#### 4. *The Book of Khalid*: The Book that Launched the Future of Arab American Literature:

Ameen Rihani first wrote his book in 1911, an age characterized by tension, dependence to imperialist powers, and the Ottoman Empire colonizing Greater Syria, Rihani's homeland. He wrote his book in the English language, yet ornamented it with an "Eastern" spirit, along with meticulous Arab thinking and style of writing. Indeed, Rihani infused his origins within the text in order for the book to acquire a pluralistic meaning, and for it to represent both the American dream and the "Eastern" spirituality. Rihani wrote a book that sought to cast a new vision on religious thinking, on human freedom, and on liberty. He put to the fore a literary production that intended to compress the physical distance and the geography separating the two opposed worlds. Moreover, this book's objective was to join the East and the West despite the latter's materialistic tendencies, and the former's spiritual and metaphysical inclinations. That is why Rihani ventured to write a book that harmonized the existence of both the Orient and the Occident in the same pages; it is because Rihani staunchly believed that they were rather complementary and homogeneous. Although the idea of creating a new world, where both the Eastern and Western cultures and values mingled, appears to be somehow irrational, it really seemed possible in *The Book of Khalid*. Wail Hassan writes:

Heir to two literary and cultural traditions, Rihani not only contributed to both but also tried to fuse them together. That he wrote in two languages throughout his life meant that such "bridging" involved constant literary and cultural translation.<sup>28</sup>

The eponymous hero's journey is drawn from Ameen Rihani's life himself. The author grew up in Freike, Lebanon, and when he almost became a teenager, at 12 years old, he already was loaded with youthful ambitions and considerations for his future. Therefore, he traveled to the

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<sup>28</sup> Hassan, Wail S. « The Rise of Arab-American Literature: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani ». *American Literary History*. 2008. p.248.

United States in order to find work opportunities. The United States represented for him the land that promised the oppressed liberation and success, the land that pledged to realize every immigrant's modest dream. For such alluring reasons, immigration was an achievement for him. This is almost exactly what happened for the eponymous hero, Khalid, and his friend Shakib. They were living under unbearable conditions with the presence of colonialist Turkey on their territories. Suheil Bushrui clarifies the situation and thus writes:

Rihani's *The Book of Khalid* is a philosophical and largely autobiographical work employing an unusual narrative technique and somewhat florid language [...]. The story of Khalid, the hero of Rihani's novel, begins in Baalbeck, his place of birth, where he becomes restless with the restricted way of life and decides to head for the land of material promise, America. He and his friend Shakib sell their mules and set off on a journey fraught with incident.<sup>29</sup>

However, this journey was not all imbued with accomplishment and great feats. Rather, it was the cause of his sense of alienation and disillusionment. When Khalid traveled to America, he became later disenchanted with its extreme materialism and pragmatism, notions that contradict his mindset as a spiritual. Indeed, Shakib and Khalid, in the novel, start working as peddlers in order to provide for their lives there. Shakib prospered as an intellectual while Khalid reached within himself and became a philosopher who is interested in a more mystical and esoteric approach of life. Afterwards, he started experimenting with the Bohemian scene of New York City along with being involved in the political scene of New York. Suheil Bushrui illustrates Khalid's life in America: "Khalid continually struggles and becomes disillusioned about the New World, finding solace only in books about philosophy and metaphysics. After unhappy brushes with sex and politics, culminating in a ten-day jail sentence, he sets sail for his homeland with Shakib."<sup>30</sup>

Indeed, Khalid's situation in America becomes more complicated and his ideas unfathomable for those who knew him. He was an idealist and a perfectionist. Khalid, at that period of his life, became spiritually exiled and grew incapable of integrating in the American society. Actually, the author of the book was excommunicated when he returned to his hometown, the same unfortunate event that happened to Khalid as well. In the book, the protagonist is distinguishable through his unconventionality and his rebellious proclivities against established religion, superstition, and colonialism.

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<sup>29</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet, a new Annotated Edition*, Oneworld Publications, 2012.p.xli. (original published in 1923)

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

The protagonist was in deep shock for he was unable to marry his cousin Najma. In fact, the Church forbade him from doing so under the claim that Khalid should not disobey God's will. Under such pretexts, Khalid was separated from his beloved and that was one of the moments that ferociously prompted him to continue his attacks on the irrational orders issued by the Church in his village. Moreover, Khalid was accused of promoting heresy and acting aggressively when a church member sought to calm him down and invite him back to faith in God. Suheil Bushrui writes:

Back in Lebanon, Khalid's independent thinking continues to create problems for the young man. He angers Maronite clerics in his native city by refusing to attend church services and by propagating heretical ideas. His request to marry his young cousin Najma is denied by church leaders and Khalid is excommunicated.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, after the damaging events that happened to Khalid, and while suffering from a broken spirit and a shaking loyalty towards his family and his entourage, he begins another journey where he leaves for Beirut after trying to live a life of solitude as an ascetic in Mount-Lebanon. There, he proceeds to disseminate his ideas and his criticism of religious corruption and egocentrism. Indeed, his own experience propelled him to show the world the hypocrisy of the clerics. Yet, his exile and rejection did not come to an end. At the end of the book, he returns to his village in Baalbek, where he discovers that Najma is now alone after being abandoned by her husband and left with a child. Afterwards, he starts another journey to Egypt, this time accompanied by his beloved, his friend Shakib, and Mrs. Gotfry; a woman who became his protector in Beirut. *The Book of Khalid* ends with unexpected, tragic, and mysterious incidents. Poor Najma's life is terminated with her young baby, Mrs. Gotfry leaves for the unknown, and Khalid is nowhere to be found. Indeed, Suheil Bushrui depicts the end of the story: "At the end of the book, Khalid has disappeared without a trace, probably still dreaming of the unification of the human race, and of all things good."<sup>32</sup>

To conclude, *The Book of Khalid* by Ameen Rihani is a book about skepticism, rationality, and rebellion. It is also a creation which intended to build a mental space where the East and the West were united, and completed each other in terms of values such as modernity and liberty. It is, moreover, a book about an exiled protagonist. In fact, Khalid could not find a safe haven for himself where to be understood and be accepted as a philosopher and an Arab-

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<sup>31</sup> Bushrui, Suheil B. « The First Arab Novel in English: The Book of Khalid». 2013. P.31.

<sup>32</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet, A new Annotated Edition*, Oneworld Publications, 2012.p.xli.

American. His personality was no longer a carrier of a single background. As a matter of fact, his voyage to the United States drastically revolutionized his perception of the world and shaped in him a new Western identity that had to be coupled with the lively Eastern man that still inhabits him. The consequences of such in-betweenness gave birth to uneasiness, and spontaneously created a feeling of exile and insecurity by which it became difficult for him to specify a belonging. However, Khalid, despite his struggle, defends his stance and tries to overcome being exiled and marginalized in terms of thought or of nationality.

## 5. Exile: A Dominating Theme in Ameen Rihani's *The Book of Khalid*.

This study will be centered on the forms exile takes in both the events of the story and in some of the formal and structural elements of Rihani's text. Exile is defined not as the traditional, politically-connoted word that is heard in the media; as someone being exiled from one's home country for displaying an antagonistic stance towards a political regime for example. Rather, in this context, exile refers to both the psychological and physical alienation of an immigrant whose roots extended from the Middle East and reached the other part of the globe: The United States. This state of identity-related polarity and confusion created within the protagonist a feeling of marginalization and labeled him as an outcast. Therefore, this study will explore the shapes of exile throughout the novel with a special focus on the protagonist of *The Book of Khalid*. Exile takes many definitions into consideration, yet they all lead to one path of meaning. For example, in the words of Fred Poché, Palestinian-American scholar and thinker Edward Said defines Exile as such:

D'ailleurs, il s'agit aussi de définir l'intellectuel comme un exilé, un marginal, un amateur [...] La majorité des gens ont conscience d'une culture, d'un environnement, d'un pays alors que les exilés en connaissent au moins deux. Or, une telle expérience les rend conscients qu'il existe des « dimensions simultanées ». Pour un exilé, les habitudes propres à la vie, l'expression et l'activité dans un nouvel environnement se confrontent de manière inévitable au souvenir de ces mêmes éléments dans un autre environnement. Les espaces, le nouveau et l'ancien, se révèlent donc tous les deux marquants, réels. Ils s'établissent en « contrepoint » l'un de l'autre.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Poché, Fred. « Edward W. Saïd ou l'humanisme d'un exilé ». *Études* 3 (2014): 73–83.p.82.

In this statement, Said explains that an exile is a person who encompasses a duality. In fact, he simultaneously lives with two identities which leads him eventually to either choose both of them and establish a unity within his representation of himself, or remain simply on the margin of both countries. Consequently, the exile would probably experience an everlasting sense of hesitation and inability to find his or her proper physical and mental space, which is destructive for one's self-esteem, and causes intellectual "homelessness". Moreover, Said asserts that an intellectual can be an exile, which is the case for Khalid. Indeed, Khalid's situation moves in two directions: When he left for the United States voluntarily, exile was a natural consequence of his immigration because he had to abandon Lebanon for a period of time. Furthermore, he started to suffer the effects of the true experience of exile when he became an incomprehensible intellectual and philosopher. Second, the sense of exile deepened when he returned home for he was incapable, as a thinker, to implement his ideas into the Lebanese community. To conclude, exile in *The Book of Khalid* is rooted within the protagonist's mind and self vis-à-vis his religious belonging, the political situation of his country of origin and the United States where he bred, for the first time, his rational and creative side, and drew his general outlook of his own existence and ambitions. In addition, exile can be also perceived from a positive perspective. Indeed, in *The Book of Khalid*, the eponymous hero retreats to solitude when he decides to stay alone in Mount-Lebanon and engage in meditation and reflection without interference or direct contact with others. These moments he spent on the mountain exteriorized his internal exile and illustrated his torn psyche through an unprecedented identification with nature. Indeed, Khalid wanted to be alone. Yet, this loneliness was nothing but a reflection of his skepticism and his mature philosophical and mystical insight. Also, this sudden retreat was an opportunity for Khalid to discover nature and consider it as a divine entity to be venerated and worshipped. Therefore, this self-inflicted exile provided Khalid with new perspectives on nature and inspired him to consider her as sacred. For instance, Khalid commences his "Book the Second" by a letter to Nature and calls her "Mother eternal, divine, satanic, all-encompassing, all nourishing, all-absorbing"<sup>34</sup>. Besides, David Patterson writes that "to be nowhere is to hear only your own voice; that is what defines the condition of exile."<sup>35</sup> In fact, Khalid is a refuge in nature. This is the wilderness: an unspecified and unnamed area contrarily to villages or cities. There, the protagonist's solitude assisted him in hearing his voice echoing among the light feathers, the

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<sup>34</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*, Melville House Publishing, 2012 .p.95 (1911).

<sup>35</sup> Patterson, David. *Exile: The Sense of Alienation in Modern Russian Letters*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015. p.168.



solid rocks, and the dense bushes. Therefore, exile in this context is more of a notion related to the spirit of the person. It is a psychological condition. Exile also is illustrated by Palestinian-American thinker Edward Said when he explains this state of mental ostracism: “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.”<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the dawn of Arab American literature first began with *Al Mahjar* group or the émigrés, among them Rihani. With his first Arab American novel written in 1911: *The Book of Khalid*. The Lebanese American author introduced a story that defied religious dogmas and shed light on an Arab-American’s fluctuating experience between East and West. Rihani also embodied his skepticism by denouncing corruption on both the religious and political levels. Indeed, through Khalid’s journey, he sought to create a picaresque novel in which the protagonist moved from a place to another to search for his identity, especially that he felt exiled spiritually, physically, and politically. Suheil Bushrui illustrates this situation:

In one of his Arabic essays, Rihani wrote: Remove those banners above your head—speaking of sects and factions—and erase from the tablet of your heart what your predecessors have inscribed therein of prejudice or envy. Purify, my brother, the tablet within yourself and erase from it all traces of defilement. Be thou none other than thyself and inscribe upon this tablet the beautiful, sweet words: Liberty, Truth, Love, Beauty; and be a true human being.<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, it is important to receive this work of art, *The Book of Khalid*, as a message to purify humanity from the gloomy hatred suffocating its peace. Indeed, it is a book that Rihani believed would incite both Easterners and Westerners to achieve a state of union and fight the endless and insignificant minor differences which degenerate in front of the noble values humanity could produce and benefit from.

In this research, I will be focusing, first, on the nature of Political Exile that Khalid unconsciously delves into and is subject to at the same time. The first chapter will be centered upon the protagonist’s political perspectives which he developed during his stay in America. Indeed, Khalid nurtured a Western-oriented view of the state, based on a comparison he

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<sup>36</sup> Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Harvard University Press.2000.p173.

<sup>37</sup> Bushrui, Suheil B. « The First Arab Novel in English: The Book of Khalid ». University of Maryland, 2013. p.33.

established between sectarian Syria and the epitome of freedom and democracy: the United States. I will be thus analyzing the political situation of Greater Syria in order to be able to understand the hero's psychological rift that led him to be disenchanted by the clarified view he obtained of the downward and corrupt Ottoman rule. The first chapter will envisage Khalid's attempts at American integration until the reasons for his final rejection. Also, I will be explaining why the protagonist's exile is related to his own perceptions on both political systems. Indeed, Khalid did not approve neither of the practicality of democracy nor of the monarchical aspect of the Ottoman system. This rejection and criticism formed a rebellious mind that refused conformity, and thus accepted to stray away from the norms. Khalid, therefore, held that democracy should not only be inscribed on paper, while he believed that this same value should also be implemented in an East that still lives with an embryonic vision of what a sovereign, self-governing state should look like. Second, Khalid does not contend with his divergent opinion on politics. He rather discovers that his vision evolves and creates an intertwining link with spirituality. Indeed, the hero begins to realize that political reform would never take place unless the peoples from both sides start considering spirituality differently. Consequently, he ventures to encourage a secular state in his home country through encouraging the disregard for traditionalism and by infusing a Western transcendentalist stance on nature. Lastly, Khalid's physical and intellectual exile feeds on his psychological stability and creates a paradigm of an outcast out of him. For this reason, I will be highlighting a psychoanalytic explanation of Khalid by taking into consideration theories on how to sublimate one's internal dissociation into a healthier form of activity, alleviating its painful aftermath. On the other hand, I will be examining humor and humanism as retreats and cures that helped Khalid overcome his incorporeal ailments.

The major issue we wish to take into consideration through this research is this cause-and-effect polemic relationship between the feelings of an exilic subject and demanding reform. Indeed, *the Book of Khalid* is a story of a Man who seeks reform but has to suffer from marginalization as a result. As a matter of fact, becoming an exile, physically and intellectually, is due to developing a revolutionary stance against what is common. Indeed, this entails that Khalid's enlightening perspectives are double-edged: they can engender reform. Yet, the protagonist must eternally pay the price.

*1) Political Exile: Khalid's Perspectives on Corruption in the Politics of the Ottoman Empire and the United States.*

## A) Corruption of the Ottoman Empire and Its Consequences on Khalid's Life :

Since Khalid's life in the book is inspired by the life of the author Rihani himself, we will be examining the protagonist's experience in both Lebanon and the United States. In this first chapter, our main focus will be the political stance of the hero based on Rihani's opinions as well. Indeed, Khalid was raised in Baalbek, a Lebanese territory that was under the control of imperialist Turkey. This part will scrutinize the paradox characterizing Khalid's thought in comparison to the political status quo of the period. In fact, Khalid as a reformer in spirit, denounced the dependence of his people to the Turks, and disapproved of absolute rule. Thus, in this part, there will be more scrutiny of Khalid's reformist mindset vis-à-vis the Ottoman rule, especially that Rihani, the creator of Khalid's character, believed that the oppressed peoples had the right to decide their own destiny and political future.

### 1. The Ottoman Empire and Corruption according to Rihani:

During the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Ottoman Empire, or the Turkish Empire was the predominant political, economic, and military force in Anatolia, North Africa, and the Middle East, with Constantinople as the authoritarian and leading center of this immense power. Indeed, when *the Book of Khalid* was published around 1911, Greater Syria was still under Turkish control. This meant that Rihani was directly in contact with the violent political sphere of the time, which impelled him to voice his indignation against the atrocities of such hegemony. Indeed, the author of *the Book of Khalid*, similarly to the character Khalid, was a man of peace who only strove to write and express himself against the Ottomans, whom he considered to have captured the freedom of the Syrian people. Indeed, in his article entitled "The Thought and Works of Ameen Rihani", Dr. Suheil B. Bushrui states that Rihani was a:

Fervent opponent of the Ottoman regime, especially in the countries of the Near East, Rihani used a visit to Mexico in 1917 to urge local Syrian and Lebanese expatriates to support the cause of the Allies against that of the Axis powers, which included Ottoman Turkey. Since Mexico was on the side of the Axis powers at the time, this earned him a period in jail, after which he was thrown out of the country as an undesirable alien. But his words had the desired effect: many volunteers for the Allied forces came forward from the community to which he had addressed himself.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bushrui, Suheil B. « The Thought and Works of Ameen Rihani ».1999.p.5.

Indeed, Rihani fought to emancipate the land he comes from and the people he belongs to by instilling in them the will and resistance to regain their independence and by diffusing among them the spiritual strength needed to block the Ottoman control, preventing thus the people from blind acceptance of humiliation and dishonor, and protecting them from the loss of their heritage .Indeed, Rihani feared the progressive vanishing of identity and tradition for he considered it an inevitable consequence of the existence of imperialist powers in general, and specifically , in this context, of imperialist Turkey .As a matter of fact, Dr Bushrui explains that :

Ameen Rihani was a modest man who sought no personal glory in his undertakings in the service of mankind. He believed in striving tirelessly for the causes closest to his heart, and the impeccable integrity, sincerity ,and honesty which characterized everything he ever said or did is illustrated by his Arabic motto : ‘Say your word and go your way’ .<sup>39</sup>

This explains the unending energy and endurance with which Rihani was prepared to renounce his personal freedom in order to exchange it for the liberation of the Syrian peoples from Ottoman domination. Besides, it is mentioned by Dr Suheil Bushrui that Rihani:

Never lost sight of the rich cultural heritage into which he was born, and which was bequeathed to the world by Arab civilization. He was a dedicated liberal, but his idealism was tempered with a very practical recognition of the need for an ordered, disciplined society. And whilst firmly opposed to blind fanaticism, extremism and bigotry, he always retained a healthy respect for tradition.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, Rihani believed that imperialist powers -such as the Ottoman Empire -were the reasons for the fragmentation and the deterioration of the dominions they controlled. In fact, the Ottoman Empire started its expansion in the early fourteenth century and definitively collapsed four years after the end of World War I. During this period, the Ottoman rulers established themselves as Caliphs – the title given to kings who ruled according to Islamic laws and who introduced themselves as the successors of the Prophet of the Islamic religion - which led to eventual corruptive practices for they only pretended to be the representatives of God on earth. These pretexts were some of the reasons that provoked Rihani and pushed him to debunk this corruption and tyranny justified and legalized by recourse to religion. For instance, Khalid alludes to financial corruption among the Ottomans and recounts the events during his journey: “Indeed, we are in a country where one can not travel without a passport [...] And the boatmen and officials of the Ottoman Empire can better read a gold piece than a

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid* p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*.

passport.”<sup>41</sup> Also, since *the Book of Khalid* is an oeuvre that exteriorizes the traumatic sense of exile of its protagonist Khalid who lived under this imperialist regime, it can be concluded that Rihani chose Khalid to articulate his rejection of the politics of the time. For instance, in the book, Shakib, a friend of Khalid’s, and the narrator of his *Histoire Intime*, describes the glorious monuments of Lebanon and with an embittered tone, he recounts with melancholy the era of glory and dignity witnessed by his country in the past. He also belittles the Turkish Empire by admitting that once, Lebanon was also a glorious, expanded political force which once ruled the Mediterranean. Indeed, Shakib asserts:

Be this as it may. It is not our business here to probe the corruption of any particular Government. But we observe that this miserable botch of a monument is to the ruins of the Acropolis, what this modern absolutism, this effete Turkey is to the magnificent tyrannies of yore. Indeed, nothing is duller, more stupid, more prosaic than a modern absolutism as compared with an ancient one.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the degree of corruption in the Empire at Rihani’s time. For instance, This Turkish hegemony legalized slavery and human trade, especially women. Such a colonialist power was also characterized by the blatant presence of men in society who reinforced their control over women, leading to the construction of a patriarchal society. In her book entitled *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference*, Madeleine Zilfi explains that “In Ottoman practice, actual court cases as recorded in the court’s daily registers offer additional evidence of the high level of social confusion and conflict provoked by the sexual use of slave women.”<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the condition of inhabitants in the Ottoman Empire was inhumane. For instance, peasants in the Empire suffered from “discriminatory measures”<sup>44</sup> and “inequitable legal treatment, duplicative taxation [...] and restricted physical and social mobility.”<sup>45</sup>

Rihani witnessed both his country and his people’s submission to the forceful control of imperialist Turkey, which prompted him to reflect upon the possibilities for freedom and liberty for his Greater Syria, especially that colonialist powers are at times an arena for internal corruption between rulers and officials, which guarantees not the dignity of the peoples nor considers their voices and opinions valuable.

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<sup>41</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company, New York. 1911. P.29.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* p.22.

<sup>43</sup> Zilfi, Madeleine. *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference*. Cambridge University Press.2010.p.206.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*.

## **2. The Ottoman Empire and Rihani's Khalid: A Political System against Religious Tolerance:**

The Ottoman Empire was brought into existence under its first ruler: Osman. In fact, he was a follower of the Islamic religion, which is the main reason behind establishing the Turkish hegemony under the motto of Islamic rules and laws. However, the Middle East, an area that comprises Egypt, Greater Syria, Iraq, and Arabia is a geographical portion of the world known for its immense religious, cultural, and linguistic varieties. Indeed, Moses, Jesus of Nazareth, and Mohamed are prophets who first saw the light in that particular region. Yet, Khalid, the unfortunate intellectual exile and philosopher who dedicated his entire youth to persuade people of disregarding their differences and embracing their diversity, and strove, through the knowledge he acquired after immigrating to America, to spread values foregrounding the union of one human race untarnished with insignificant personal distinctions, was only derided and his worldview cruelly dismissed and mocked. As a matter of fact, Khalid once admitted to his companion Shakib, the man who travelled with him to the United States and remained on his side throughout both his moments of pride and his instances of distress and gloom, --as a response to the extreme suspense he felt before delivering his address on reforming Islam in front of the Sheikhs he always disdained in Damascus--, and said: "I'm not starving for pleasure."<sup>46</sup> In fact, Khalid does not consider his ventures to reform his community or to disentangle the peoples from the shackles of dependence to be a mere impulsive, momentary thought. Rather, he states that he does not randomly decide on matters "for the light free love of an exquisite caprice."<sup>47</sup> Actually, Khalid, in this particular initiative, seems to be experimenting with fasting in the purpose of voicing his cause. In reality, it is a practice tinged with a religious background, and it is common among the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is also an action by which a person releases his or her spiritual energy in order to become closer to a state of transcendence. Therefore, it is quite understood why Khalid followed this brief path. Indeed, he strives to reform others, yet prefers to achieve the state of purification and find the spiritual atmosphere required by his determination to effect a change. According to Randi Fredricks, PhD:

Fasting has been used as a means of releasing emotions and connecting one's soul with the sacred, particularly at significant transition points throughout life. In addition to its function as

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<sup>46</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1911.p.272.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

preparation for divine revelation, fasting has also served as a prelude to important events in a person's life. Through these mechanisms, fasting became a means of transformation.<sup>48</sup>

Besides, Khalid uses fasting as a preparation to acknowledge to people that, in his point of view, all religions should be the diffusers of peace and harmony, not the causers of animosity and inequity. Indeed, Khalid is aware of the political system of the Ottoman Empire that had created hierarchical and discriminatory laws leaving Christians to be regarded as second-class citizens in contrast to their Muslim compatriots. Indeed, Fouad Boustany insists in his book entitled *Studia Libanica 1, Studia Arabica 2*, on the injustice inflicted on Arab Christians by the Ottoman Political system : « Dans toutes les autres parties de l'Empire Ottoman, les Chrétiens devaient vivre dans un état de sujétion qui confinait à la servitude. Le régime d'inégalité entre Musulmans et Chrétiens était élevé... ».<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, Rihani fashioned Khalid to be the messenger of religious reconciliation and released him in a land controlled by a tyrannical and theocratic government, and set him loose among a people governed by despotic rulers. Indeed, Khalid can be perceived as Rihani's own reflection in *the Book of Khalid*, for both of them lived under the shadows of a shattered, fractured East that was besieged by the Ottoman oppressor and fragmented into sects, which only increased religious and political tension in the region, and prompted Rihani's Khalid to be the Syrians' savior from political corruption. As a consequence, Khalid's sense of alienation and exile became more conspicuous for he is to be regarded the only figure in his community, whose resolution is to liberate the mind as a priority. As a result, the crowd would be able to regain dignity and spiritual grace. Indeed, he explains his point of view : "The emigration of the mind before the revolution of the state, my Brothers. The soul must be free, and the mind, before one has a right to be a member of a free Government, before one can justly enjoy his rights and perform his duties as a subject."<sup>50</sup> Thus, Khalid is a spiritually exiled subject because he believes that, for people to drastically rise up to the level of true Ottoman citizens and start being treated equally by officials despite their contrasting religious affiliations, they must control their fate in an imperialist government through igniting a revolution within their minds. He is marginalized for people –including religious scholars ("ulema") and regular citizens - are unable to conceive the importance of accepting others in a

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<sup>48</sup> Fredricks, Randi. *Fasting: An Exceptional Human Experience*. All Things Well Publication. 2013. p215

<sup>49</sup> Boustany, Fouad. *Studia Libanica 1, Studia Arabica 2*. Editions de la Revue Phénicienne, 2014. p 33.

<sup>50</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company. New York. 1911. p265.



society, and are incapable of comprehending the type of freedom Khalid aspires for them. In fact, they are perceived by Sheikh Taleb, a friend of Khalid's, as "ignorant, obtuse, fanatical, blind. 'God hath sealed up their hearts and their hearing'"<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, these people are reluctant to learn the concepts of tolerance and freedom suggested by Khalid. In fact, for the latter, the basic image about God that he struggles to promote to the Syrians is an image of unity and coexistence. Indeed, Khalid states that: "religion is purely a work of the heart—the human heart and the heart of the world as well. For have not the three monotheistic religions been born in this very heart of the world, in Arabia, Syria, and Palestine?"<sup>52</sup> However, Khalid is found to be an exiled thinker in front of crowds who rarely reach to their inner essence as humans, which renders it impossible for them to understand Khalid's conception of God. Indeed, according to Charles K. Bellinger: "Kierkegaard understands the crowd to be an assemblage of individuals who are hiding from God and attempting to evade the difficult process of spiritual growth. The crowd is untruth because it is made up of persons who are falsifying what it means to be a creature of God."<sup>53</sup>

Here, according to Bellinger, the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard holds that the majority is generally not connected to the true meaning of being spiritual. Indeed, people worship a false God that does not teach them the ways to unite and thus, rebel against the despot as Khalid would expect.

To conclude, Khalid is an unorthodox Lebanese who fervently believes in the power of spirituality and its capability to both destroy the brutal Ottoman political regime and, simultaneously, create a human haven in which all religions are transformed into one paramount value that conquers all destruction: humanity.

### **3. Khalid's Utopian East:**

From a political standpoint, Ameen Rihani and the fictional version of himself, Khalid, seem to share identical political stances from which they both manifest their perfect version of their divided East. For example, Rihani, in a poem enlisted in his collection entitled *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*, paints a joyful and optimistic portrait of an East that has gained

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p.289.

<sup>53</sup> Bellinger, Charles K. "The Crowd is Untruth": A Comparison of Kierkegaard and Girard'. University of Virginia, p.113.

its independence from the Ottoman Empire, and that has captured its freedom for eternity. Indeed, Rihani writes:

WHEN Othman's sword, [...] is broken  
And Othman's gods are smitten to the dust,  
And naught remains, not even a rusty token  
Of their hierarchical cruelty and lust;--  
When church and mosque and synagogue shall be,  
Despite the bigot's cry, the zealot's prayer,  
Unbounded in their bounties all and free [...] <sup>54</sup>

In this reflection, Rihani draws a promising future for his homeland, where the political authority of the oppressive Ottomans perishes and is consequently followed by inexorable religious unification where not a Jew, a Christian, or a Muslim is attacked nor even massacred because of his or her vision of God and life. Indeed, the speaker longs for an East regulated through a political system that advances not any creed of persecution or racism. The East, for him must not be partitioned into hierarchies where the Muslims enjoy their complete rights while the Christians are exterminated and forced to pay what is called “*jiziyeh*”, which consists in a form of a tax that must be paid by all, yet doubled for the Christian Ottomans. Similarly, the East that Khalid dreams of is one of revolutions and disentanglement from despotism and subjugation. Indeed, Khalid also holds that to initiate a revolution, through which the people's freedom can be respected and realized, one must undergo a spiritual reform from within. People's souls and minds have to live a long lasting devotional metamorphosis by which their awareness of their own dignity and their consciousness grows. As a consequence, they can become responsible for their own unchaining without the interference of external political machination. In *the Book of Khalid*, the narrator recounts the “outbursts and tears and rhapsodies of Khalid” <sup>55</sup>: “They did mean, even when we first approached his cell, that something was going on in him – a revolution, a coup *d'état*, so to speak, of the spirit. For a Prince in Rags, but not in Debts and Dishonour, will throttle the Harpy which has hitherto ruled and degraded his soul”. <sup>56</sup> Although this dreadful situation expresses Khalid's reaction while imprisoned in the United States, it still reminds us of his unchanging principles towards political corruption in general. Indeed, he felt as such when

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<sup>54</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*. The Rihani House. 1970, p.36.

<sup>55</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company. New York. 1911. p.115.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid* p.115.

speaking against a false democracy, and he will always incarnate a revolutionary spirit against the Ottomans in his native Lebanon.

Thus, in this brief passage, there is implicit reference to the violence and the nature of governance the Ottoman Empire adopted in its relation to the people in general, and to Arab Christians in particular. the “Harpy” is actually defined in Greek mythology as: “employed by the gods as instruments for the punishment of the guilty[...]”<sup>57</sup> and: “represented with the head of a fair-haired maiden and the body of a vulture...The Harpies would appear to be personifications of sudden tempests, which, with ruthless violence, sweep over whole districts...injuring all before them.”<sup>58</sup>

Here, Rihani explicitly denounces the theocratic regime by insisting on the fact that these Harpies are sent by divine powers to inflict pain on people. Also, there is accurate representation of the degree of mercilessness and hypocrisy the Ottoman government was characterized by through this imagery framed by Rihani. In fact, the physiognomy of the Harpies suggests, with the “fair-haired maiden” that the Ottomans give the impression of being wise rulers only from a theoretical point of view. Yet, the body of a vulture, which is responsible for action and practice, is one of brutality and bestiality. Therefore, Khalid calls for an East free of inauthentic spirituality and blind allegiance to the rulers. Finally, Khalid believes, although he advances a degree of criticism towards American democracy in specific, that the latter political paradigm would be appropriate for Lebanon, as it guarantees, at least, the right for the Lebanese to be involved in the political arena of their nation and have the privilege to choose their leader. Indeed, he explains: “To these United States shall the Nations of the World turn one day for the best model of good Government; in these United States the well –springs of the higher aspirations of the soul shall quench the thirst of every race-traveller on the highway of emancipation...”<sup>59</sup>

Hence, both Khalid and Rihani view their utopian East as a free land where detained people strive to implement a spiritual revolution by which a model of a democratic government is finally put into practice. Consequently, this system would become capable of offering them the gift of honor and respectability.

Democracy and spiritual innovation –as in one’s liberation from dogmas and fanaticism-- are, at the same time, values and events that Khalid would sacrifice his exiled spirit only to

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<sup>57</sup> Berens, E.M. *The Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome*. MetaLibri.2009, p.116.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>59</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company. New York.1911. p.110.

witness them in practice. Indeed, only Khalid, among all members of his community, has this exceptional intuitive insight and revolutionary thought that provide him with the clarity of mind he needs to debunk the political decadence of the East. That is why the wise Khalid suffers from this intellectual dissimilitude vis-à-vis his community and always pays the price of being ahead of his time in mind and spirit.

## B) Politics in the United States and Khalid's Failed Participation.

In this section, we will be exploring Khalid's life in Little Syria in Manhattan, along with examining Khalid's brief experience as a politician who was overtly too moral to be one, which caused his disillusionment with politics and its mechanisms in the States, especially that the latter is considered to be a model for democracy and justice. Therefore, the protagonist retreated into exile once again; the exile of not being understood and recognized; the state of being confined and imprisoned in body and spirit because of one's principles, while enduring disrespect. It is the exile of the lonely who is truthfully dedicated to the attainment of what he believes to be a spiritual revival of the West. As a matter of fact, one should distinguish between Khalid's plan for the East afore mentioned --which encompasses a spiritual change exhibited by the people's release from religious dogmas—and his future ideal for the West, which also adopts a spiritual path, yet manifested in the revival of that side of the Western individual, which was concealed with materialism and excessive pragmatism. It is not necessarily religious. Yet, it transcends the extreme attachment of Western people to what is not beyond their scope of vision or senses, or even consciousness.

### **1. The Nature of the Political System in the United States and Its Relation to Khalid:**

For both Rihani and Khalid, traveling to the United States as Levantine philosophers and thinkers represented a radical change in the lives of both the author and the protagonist he created, not only as a simple voyage in which they discovered a new culture and a distinctive way of life, but also on the spiritual and political levels. Indeed, immigrating to the United States was not a trivial passage from a land to another. Rather, it was the passage of the soul from the native country to the land of knowledge and prosperity; it was also a *Via Dolorosa* or a Way of Suffering that they had to withstand in order to reach their own promised land:

America. Indeed, the *Via Dolorosa* is generally defined as the strenuous path followed by Jesus Christ towards his crucifixion, which almost reflects Khalid's trouble on the boat to America, and the difficulties he encountered at his arrival while venturing to adapt to the American political system. For instance, the narrator recounts the desolate circumstances of the voyage: "We ourselves have known a little of the suffering and misery which emigrants must undergo [...] How they are huddled like sheep on deck from Beirut to Marseilles; and like cattle transported under hatches across the Atlantic; and bullied and browbeaten by rough disdainful stewards." <sup>60</sup>

In this passage, immigrants, among them Khalid and Shakib are portrayed as insignificant and senseless. They are actually reduced to an animalistic image by which they are not able to neither defend themselves nor object to the brutality they are enduring. However, despite the cold-blooded conduct, the "New World paradise is well worth these passing privations." <sup>61</sup> Besides, Khalid and Shakib operated as such and were ready to challenge the upcoming perils of their humiliating voyage for they were cognizant of the possible flattering prospects that were to be found in the New World. Indeed, they were "lured to America by the notion of sudden wealth and the prestige it would confer on their return home" <sup>62</sup>. Yet, Khalid was not to find a home neither in the promising West, nor in his enchanting East. Indeed, the latter developed a fragmented identity that was not suitable for any of the two countries. This experience influenced Khalid and Shakib's manner of reflecting on the world, exposed a people governed by a political system based on liberty, freedom, and justice, and widened further the colossal rift already taking place between Lebanon and America on the political level. As a matter of fact, the West in Khalid's opinion --at the beginning of his arrival to America--, and represented by the United States, is the ultimate exemplifier of a political structure where dignified citizenship is preserved and where the optimal epitome of freed human beings manifests itself among Americans. Contrarily, Khalid saw the East as the embodiment of "modern absolutism" <sup>63</sup> and the victim of a political regime indifferent of the human freedom of choice, and ignorant of Man's sanctity. Therefore, the American model of government is inspiring and worthy of consideration for Khalid. In fact, before modern-day America was declared to become an independent nation, it was --almost similar to Rihani's

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* p 29-30.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* p.30.

<sup>62</sup> Naff, Alixa. *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. Southern Illinois University Press. 1985. p.82.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid* p .22.

East—under the rule of a monarchy. The American people struggled to achieve their independence and, therefore, to build an autonomous nation. This process demanded the presence of a philosophy that would be the basic instrument for the creation of an American society responsible for its own fate and in charge of eliminating absolute rule. Thomas Paine: “a political theorist and writer who had come to America”<sup>64</sup> and who “published a 50-page pamphlet”<sup>65</sup> entitled *Common Sense*, was one of these philosophers who advocated the eradication of the unlimited prerogatives of a monarchy that dismisses commoners’ rights. Furthermore, “Paine attacked the idea of hereditary monarchy”<sup>66</sup> and established the basics of an independent, free country. These values advanced by Paine were motivational enough for Khalid to be lured into the land where wealth is abundant and the people’s voices are heard. Indeed, the American political system was founded on the values of democracy. This means that it is a system that prioritizes the will of the people and grants them the power to designate their leader. Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the modern American nation, weaved a written declaration that “not only announced the birth of a new nation, but also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the entire world.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, it was the philosophy of human equality that preserves each American citizen’s rights and especially the right for “the pursuit of happiness”.

Thus, America, which was both Rihani and Khalid’s destination, is the land where, in theory, the liberty of humans is preserved and protected, and the democratic process is one that enables all Americans and newcomers from interfering into the daily political interactions of their country. Indeed, these principles are noble in nature and are engraved in the memory of a nation that battled confinement to reach its self-sufficiency. However, Khalid’s experience was not to be regarded as flattering nor positive. Rather, it was quite eye-opening for it unleashed the contradictions between theory and reality, and engendered Khalid’s disillusionment, disturbance, and exile.

## **2. A Dishonest Political Maneuvering and Khalid’s Disillusionment :**

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<sup>64</sup> Hofstadter, R., Olson, K. W., & Gray, W. *An Outline of American History*. United States Department State.1994.p .7.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid* p.73.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

As far as Khalid is concerned, arriving to the United States would eventually lead the reader to collect a more in-depth vision and understanding of the protagonist's confrontation with the variety of scenes this experience had offered him. Indeed, this involves Khalid's exploration of the New World on the spiritual or the pragmatic levels. The spiritual level imparts the locals' perception of metaphysical matters and their stereotypical heterodoxy in comparison to the accepted idea on the Orientals' traditionalism and religiosity. As for the pragmatic side, this entails the level of materialism Americans and Westerners abide by contrasted to the Orientals' pure involvement in the incorporeal. In brief, Khalid sought to comprehend and contrast the devotional inclinations of the American people to those of the Orientals, along with trying to delve into the political domain of the United States and the degree of the Americans' involvement in it. As a matter of fact, this section will take into consideration Khalid's contact with political America along with his friction against the officials and the political personnel, especially in Little Syria, Manhattan. Indeed, When Syrian-Lebanese immigrants first came to the United States, they mainly settled in the East Coast, specifically in the city of New York. Indeed, their fundamental reasons for coming were mainly embodied in their desires to find security and grasp job opportunities they heard they could be offered to them in America. For instance, Alixa Naff, in her article written in a book entitled *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*; she recounts the Syrian adventures towards the world of unending possibilities: "New York City was the primary port of entry for the flood of immigrants who sought American shores. They came for a variety of reasons in the last quarter of the nineteenth century [...] Hope of quick wealth spread like wildfire throughout the villages of Mount Lebanon and ultimately Syria and Palestine."<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, after their arrival, they started forming small communities and "developed a settlement [...] that would become known as the Syrian 'Mother Colony'"<sup>69</sup>. The latter refers to the small area in Manhattan where early Syrians were mostly accumulated and assembled in that period of time. As adventuresome and audacious he is, Khalid believes that his existence is surrounded around learning and noble striving for knowledge and nothing else except for providing the mind its share of insight, especially when the will to acquire this knowledge is strongly reinforced and encouraged by the American political sphere, a sphere

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<sup>68</sup> Benson, Kathleen, and Kayal, Philip M. *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*. Museum of the City of New York. Syracuse University Press.2002.p 3-5.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.* p.4.

evoking a sense of freedom of expression. Indeed, Ameen Rihani is compatible in thought with the character he molded: Rebellious, philosophically-oriented, and baring a meticulous inclination to the analysis of all situations he finds himself plunged in. According to Nathan C Funk:

Ameen Rihani developed a strong affinity for Western intellectualism. He advanced a way of thinking that bore the stamp of the European progressive tradition, with an emphasis on such revolutionary ideals as liberty, equality, and fraternity[...] the “Western” aspect of Rihani’s thought is at its most pronounced in his early writings on political freedom[...]and freedom of thought.<sup>70</sup>

In the light of Khalid’s belief that “knowledge is power, but in order to feel at home with it, we must be constitutionally qualified.”<sup>71</sup>, which alludes to Khalid’s confidence in an American system paving the path for political participation and freedom of expression under constitutional provisions, the protagonist unhesitatingly delves into the political labyrinths of the State of New York as one of the qualified representatives of the Syrian community in the Tammany Hall Organization. Historically, the latter emerged as a social benevolent association then became a political institution which aimed at attracting newly-arrived immigrants to become Tammany “citizens”. This later produced participants who would “canvass” votes for officials in order to maintain a collaboration that was basically based upon officials granting assistance and security for people in exchange for votes, which shattered the original Jeffersonian ideals this institution was built upon. It is learned in *The Book of Khalid*, while the Baalbekian was in New York, that “the high post of political canvasser of the Syrian District was offered to Khalid.”<sup>72</sup> As a matter of fact, the eponymous hero’s mission is to solicit voters by any means possible, regardless of the nature of these mechanisms, and whether genuinely and democratically sought for or not. However, this political maneuvering required from Khalid, and embodied in merely bribing voters and “[cashing] [his] influence among [his] people”, appears to contradict Khalid’s search for morality and purity of spirit, immaculate of all corruption. Indeed, the clash of creeds lies in Khalid’s firm belief that he “shall endeavour to keep [his] blood in circulation by better, purer

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<sup>70</sup> Funk, Nathan C. Sitka, B Betty J. *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West a Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. American University Center for Global Peace, 2004. P 6-7.

<sup>71</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company. New York. 1911. P.71.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.* p. 98-99.



means”<sup>73</sup>, which explains Khalid’s authentic and honorable pursuit of living and of all financial matters, against the objectives advanced by the Tammany Hall Organization which – he discovered - are habitually realized by manipulating votes through bribery: a blatant sign of dishonesty and political corruption. According to Gustavus Myers, “the records show that a succession of prominent Tammany leaders was involved in some theft or swindle, public or private.”<sup>74</sup> Therefore, and since the Tammany Hall is mainly an organization that – theoretically - foregrounds democratic and Jeffersonian ethics through assisting people, Joyce Appleby, in an introduction about the legacy of Thomas Jefferson, highlights the integrity of Jeffersonian thought:

For Jefferson, like Thomas Paine, the implementation of natural rights required radical surgery on the traditional body politic. More urgently, the burden of old ways of thinking, of antediluvian conceits, of controlling institutions, had to be shed. Only liberation from archaic authorities of all kinds, in their view, would lift the dead hand of the past off the shoulders of the present generation [...] He took on the task of reconciling his radical understanding of personal freedom with pervasive assumptions about order and justice.<sup>75</sup>

In this context, order is contrasted to bribery and manipulative political operations destined for guaranteeing personal benefits for politicians and demanders of votes. In addition, freedom, as a concept, is antagonistic to a corruptive action such as the extortion of money out of American citizens in order to buy and sell votes which represent, by democratic definition, the voices of the populace and their right to express their opinions. Indeed, if their own ability to communicate their political ideas is violently and illegally restricted by the act of imposing a political preference on citizens, then, this would lead to the understanding that their own freedom is confined and controlled, which counters the basic comprehension of democracy as a promoting power of liberty and freedom of choice, as understood by Khalid. In fact, this chapter where Khalid is disillusioned by this strange political, yet corruptive magnetism inflicted upon regular civilians, is entitled “The Dowry of Democracy”. Rihani, in his creation of such a title, seems a bit sarcastic and critical for the “dowry”, in the Eastern tradition, is defined as an amount of money or any material gift offered to the family of a bride by the future husband as an indirect way of asking for the woman’s hand, and as a guarantee of the chastity of this bride-to-be, which might always suggest an objectification of Eastern women. Thus, by transposing this explanation to the term “Democracy”, it could be

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p.75.

<sup>74</sup> Myers, Gustavus. *Making of America the History of Tammany Hall*. Boni and Liveright, Inc. 1917.p vii.

<sup>75</sup> Onuf, Peter S. *Jeffersonian Legacies*. The University Press of Virginia .1993.p 4.

conceived that Rihani parodies it and presents it to the reader as belittled as corruption renders it. Indeed, for the canvassers of Tammany Hall, democracy is no longer an irreproachable political ethic as viewed by Khalid. It rather becomes a cliché emphasizing the hypocrisy of the act against the honesty of the thought. The editor of Khalid's story, that intermediate voice which rises between the reader and Shakib's narration of his *Histoire Intime*, cynically denounces –in a rhetorical question –, Khalid's blindness towards what democracy is reduced to in the halls of the Tammany Organization: “Were it not wiser, therefore, O Khalid, had you consulted your friend the Dictionary before you saw exact meaning of canvass and manipulation, before you put on your squeaking boots and slouch hat and gave your hand and heart to Tammany's Daughter and her Father-in –Law O-Graft ?”<sup>76</sup> Indeed, he criticizes Khalid's fast and emotional attachment to a political value already and easily abandoned by the people who are most likely to abide by it.

Khalid's political maturity conflicts with the materialistic penchant of the “Tammanyites” and their corruptive proclivities. Indeed, Khalid and Rihani alike believe in the practical and real implementation of a democratic political conduct between the halls of Tammany Organization, which would reflect the entire American political system. However, the protagonist's perfectionist tendencies and intellect is colliding with that of Tammany members for they perceive democracy as a means to justify bribery, while Khalid has faith in its true definition as a political solution that might someday prevent corruption. This difference in perspective stresses Khalid's impression of being exiled and unaccepted in terms of thought and worldview.

### **3. An Eastern Political Reformer of the West:**

Khalid's vision of American democracy –a vision fraught with hope at first, but damaged afterwards because of all of the corruptive measures that were requested from him ,and which he almost took part in -- changes after the brief political experience he undergoes. In the beginning, Khalid clings to his decision of finding a decent job in New York by which he can be able to earn not only money, but also to boost his sense of dignity through a work of honesty and responsibility, and without having to quest for deceptive approaches in order to gain financial rewards. Eventually, Khalid relinquishes the sole plan he has, which is to

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<sup>76</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company. 1911. P.101-102.

practice peddling in order to live, be able to provide for himself, and bear his expenses of living in the New World. Peddling, according to Alixa Naff, was: “The most fundamental factor in the assimilation of Syrians in America [...] it was the primary source of the tangible bounty on which their hopes and survival depended [...] the basic virtues of peddling were many. Immigrants could earn immediately; it required no real advanced training, capital, or language skills.”<sup>77</sup> Although peddling is characterized by its innumerable economic advantages for the Lebanese and the Syrians in New York such as Khalid, that does not camouflage the fact that the peddling these immigrants practiced—being always an easy path towards making fortunes-- is merely a disingenuous method for providing income. Indeed, Christian Syrians for instance, among them Khalid, would sell religious relics to Americans while attempting to convince them that these relics are authentic and real. They would promote the misleading idea that the objects they brought along with them from their home country are worth a large amount of money in order to attract buyers, especially those sensitive to religious matters. Besides, the American purchasers would likely to agree and believe the sellers’ statements-despite their invalidity- for they settled with a theory implying that, if Jesus of Nazareth is Eastern by birth, therefore, those Easterners are more likely to possess “blessed” and authentic relics. An assertion by Abraham Rihbany would, probably, represent a confirmation for the success of Syrian peddling in America:

But what I have learned from intimate associations with the Western mind, during almost a score of years in the American pulpit, is that, with the exception of the few specialists, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a people to understand fully a literature which has not sprung from that people’s own racial life [...] But as a literature the Bible is an imported article in the Western world.<sup>78</sup>

Concluding from Rihbany’s statement, Americans, thus, would be more prone to have confidence in peddlers and buy their allegedly-authentic artifacts. This is proved to be a job discarded by Khalid, for he comprehends that:

Literally, the word corruption means to destroy or decay. However, in ordinary usage, the term refers to public stealing, combined with abuse of office. In this way, corruption includes the odd behaviors, which deviate from ethics, morality, tradition, and civic virtues. According to the literal definition, such behaviors include the followings: peddling, dishonesty of any

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<sup>77</sup> Naff, Alixa. *Becoming American The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. Southern Illinois University.1985.p.128.

<sup>78</sup> Rihbany, Abraham Mitrie. *The Syrian Christ*. , London: Melrose, London, 1919.p.5.

kind, conflict of interest and bribery or acceptance of gratification, either directly or indirectly, from any person, for selfish benefits.<sup>79</sup>

Therefore, Khalid, from the beginning, opposes the idea of continuing to make sense of his existence in the Syrian-American society through being labeled a peddler. However, his participation in the Tammany Hall Political Organization reinforces his position and stance to remain faithful to his “immanent morality”<sup>80</sup>, and to his immovable belief in an American democracy that does not serve corruption, but unravels the devious proceedings of untrustworthy local politicians. Indeed, Khalid seeks to explain his point of view in a letter he writes to Boss O’Graft:

Right Dishonourable Boss:

I have just received a check from your Treasurer, which by no right whatever is due me, having been paid for my services by Him who knows better than you and your Treasurer what I deserve. The voice of the people, and their eggs and tomatoes, too, are, indeed, God’s...and instead of canvassing and orating for Democracy’s illustrious Candidate and the Noble Cause, *mashallah!* one ought to do a little canvassing for Honesty and Truth among Democracy’s leaders.<sup>81</sup>

In his way of writing this letter, the reader can notice the sorrowful tone of a wronged Easterner who discards bribery and whole-heartedly assumes that his fate and reward, are only in the hands of ‘Him’, who refers to Khalid’s version of God: an entity that he only perceives with mind and heart, believes it can establish justice and retaliation, and holds that it can restore his dignity through an earthly democracy not distorted by excessive materialism. Indeed, in his letter, Khalid attempts to reform some of the politically-deformed practices which caused the West to defame its own use of democracy, by asserting that the latter lacks spirit and is losing its humane values. For instance, Rihani admits, in his book entitled *the Path of Vision*, that:

Weak and oppressed nations are fundamentally spiritual; strong nations are, as a rule, chiefly materialistic. The one, cherishing religious ideals, soars to certain spiritual heights and now and then produces a seer to justify its languor and indolence; the other, seeking material things, bores into the earth for its treasures and keeps going down, down till its dynamic forces reach an impenetrable sterility and explode in a sudden, terrible reaction. The life of

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<sup>79</sup> Kyeyune, Pastor Stephen. *When God Calls a Man, The Faith, Calling, and Vision*. AuthorHouse. 2011. P.527.

<sup>80</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co.1911.p. 107

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 103.

such a nation is symptomatic of a diseased state of the soul. The life of the other undermines [...] its physical strength.<sup>82</sup>

Rihani forcefully denounces the excesses of nations whether in the degrees of religiosity and dull spirituality or on the level of pathological interest for materialism. He explains that, although materialism is a chief means for the power and economic maintenance of a nation, it must not reach levels beyond its healthy position. Rather, it should preserve a balance in which the spiritual can infiltrate into the suffocated trails of America. As a consequence, the West would breathe in some of the metaphysical devotions of the East. In addition, Khalid/Rihani and Walt Whitman seem to share the same view concerning the need for a minor spiritual essence that should penetrate within American democracy. In his *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman highlights that democracy is still insufficiently loaded with the essence it needs to succeed as a political paradigm. He writes:

I say that our New World democracy, however great a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results [...] it is as if we were somehow being endow'd with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, Whitman believes the flaw of democracy to be the absence of “soul” along with the politicians’ ignorance of implementing a democratic conduct in the daily lives of American citizens and all nations who aspire to reach the American political example one day. This is, indeed, the cause for corruption and for the intense focus on materialistic interests instead of the political organizations’ gaze, in this case, Tammany Hall, concentrating on the essential needs for American citizens to single out their choices freely. Therefore, the main, internal, and reformist initiative started by Khalid in that letter can be summarized in the importance of mixing materialism with a tinge of spiritual presence that manifests itself in the prioritization of the common people’s choices and liberties in exchange for their respect of their own duties towards each other in society, and towards the American political body in particular.

To conclude, democracy for Khalid does not define itself as a mere theory written on paper, rather, it should be manifested in genuine popular vote, not bought and sold, and that

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<sup>82</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Path of Vision*. James T. White and Co.1921.p.9.

<sup>83</sup> Whitman, Walt. *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers*. W. J. Gage and Co.1888.p.13.

would guarantee each person's self-respect, emphasize one's self-worth, and would not be manipulated by bribery. For only bribery lures the corrupt soul into it and attracts not a sincere citizen who represents Khalid's objective as a person on the political and personal levels. This thought, which stands in contradiction to the Tammanyites, who view that "that sort of morality will not as much as secure a vote during the campaign, nor even help to keep the lowest clerk in office"<sup>84</sup>, is only propagated among the "votaries of Mammon"<sup>85</sup> and the greedy money worshippers who must renovate their spirits in order to fit into the Easterner's reformist vision of the West. This sense of innovation Khalid seeks to execute creates a gap between him and the political officials which further confirms his exiled intellect and incompatibility with the others' process of thinking.

### C) Khalid: The Paradigm of an Exile.

Khalid moves from Lebanon in order to guarantee for himself a prospered, safer life in the New World. However, although he begins his journey as an immigrant, he soon turns into an exile for he was not able to digest the political practices of the United States. Besides, when the protagonist decides to head for his homeland in the hope of infusing into the colonized East the spirit of a free land from the West, he is persecuted and rebuked for his motives. Therefore, Khalid finds himself belonging neither to America nor to Lebanon. For this reason, the protagonist flees the city and hides within a natural environment. In this situation, it could be understood that Khalid's previous failures and his inability to integrate into both societies, although he wants to construct a dual identity, causes him to mourn the loss of affinity between him and both cultures, and to reflect upon his misadventures and breakdowns in a state of solitude which further reinforces his image as an exile both in mind and spirit. This portrait of Khalid is described by both Gibran—one of the most prominent Lebanese authors of the time and a friend of Rihani's— and Rihani through a work of literary art intermingled with Khalil Gibran's drawings, offered as a pictorial testimony of Khalid's complex philosophical journey. Besides, Khalid is an exile because he constitutes an example of hybridity whether in his perception of his identity or the world. Finally, Khalid (*the immortal*)—as his name could be explained in the Arabic language—is overwhelmed by signs of nostalgia; a nostalgia for his own principles, and a longing for reconstructing a memory of his own, in which he has always seen himself as the Lebanese and the American, and as a

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<sup>84</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, & Co. 1911.p 107.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p.108.

simple-looking immigrant from the outside, yet a psychologically and intellectually intricate exile from the inside, who seeks political and social reform against the will of tyrannical governments and controlled peoples.

## 1. Gibran and Rihani: Bringing into Life an Exiled Political Thinker.

Khalil Gibran, the writer of *the Prophet* (1923), a book of poetry very similar to Rihani's *the Book of Khalid*, not in form, yet greatly compatible with the latter in its thematic power, meaningful magnitude, and indirect ability to analyze the human condition and psyche, could be perceived as close in themes to *Khalid* especially noting the fact that *Khalid* was a major influence on Gibran, and consequently on *the Prophet's* train of argumentation and philosophy. Indeed, *the Prophet* is written and destined to criticize social corruption and denounce the community's hypocrisy in regards to laws, morals, marriage, human relations, love, and applied traditions and mores, all of this in separate poetical productions designed for the reader to be as one piece of wisdom following the other, each of them molded in the shape of a human experience or a story. In this book, the protagonist is likened to Jesus Christ, an exceptional figure of offered personal sacrifice, and who willingly absorbs others' sins and purifies their souls, not in the mere religious sense of the term, but in a worldly sense that tends to expose the Eastern community's imposture and insincerity, and Humanity's at large, by devoting himself each time to explain a moral value or a concept thanks to which humanity derives its sense of being or comprehends its worth for existing. For instance, in one poem entitled "On Giving", this prophet addresses a rich man:

Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving.  
And he answered:  
You give but little when you give of your possessions.  
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.<sup>86</sup>

Here, the prophet explains that the true meaning of giving lies not in the superficial material offering of personal objects, rather, it lies in one's soul. Giving, in this context, is more perceived as an immaterial action. It actually manifests itself in the emotional and psychological realm. For, according to the prophet, giving is to share one's sorrow, feel empathy towards the other, be prepared to spend and incorporate an effort to help and assist others in their plights or in their difficult times. The meaning of Giving of oneself leans more

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<sup>86</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet, A new Annotated Edition*, Oneworld Publications, 2012.p.21.

towards an act of devotion, of patience, and of an offering of the soul as a contribution to ease the angst of a person or release him or her from their malaise or their despair. Thus, it could be concluded that Khalid identifies with Gibran's character because they both seem to display an intense fervor of devotion especially on the mental and intellectual sides. Indeed, Khalid is a man who refuses to remain a subject of conformity with no apparent desire for change. Rather, he accepts his dilemma of being his both communities' exiled scapegoat and devotionally welcomes the challenge of being a sole, aloof philosopher who revels in the satisfaction of being a distinguished agent provocateur. Thus, Rihani and Gibran are both Lebanese American writers who almost share the same social, philosophical, and political skepticism which they both depict through their main characters. Alongside Khalid's denunciation of corruption in Tammany Hall- for which he was imprisoned-, *Almustafa*, the prophet in Gibran's *Magnum Opus*, also makes reference to issues of Law, Crime and Punishment, and Freedom. However, it should be first mentioned that the meaning of his name *Almustafa*, in the Arabic language, refers to designating someone who is chosen. Perhaps it might be clearer to simply refer to the interpretation of his name as *the Chosen One*. This appellation, in the Arab and Islamic traditions, is specifically considered to be one of the nicknames used to call the prophet Mohammed. Thus, the choice of the name cannot be regarded as fortuitous or as a coincidence, rather, it could be perceived that Gibran chose a naming that would be congruous with the title of his book, and therefore in harmony with the functions of the protagonist. However, the major character in *the Prophet* is highly reminiscent of Jesus Christ in the manner with which he delivers his knowledge. Besides, Suheil Bushrui adds that "Christ is also one of the models for *Almustafa* in *The Prophet*, and the form of the latter's teachings bears some comparison to the Sermon on the Mount in its eloquent guidance for humanity."<sup>87</sup> Thus, Khalil Gibran introduces what Bushrui calls a "Christian-Muslim synthesis"<sup>88</sup>. Therefore, Gibran creates a prophet that joins in his reasoning all the teachings of Abrahamic religions in order to stress the unity of beliefs and put to the fore the common values all human beings share despite their trivial differences. Moreover, this prophet shares his political reformist zeal with Khalid, and is characterized by being misunderstood and intellectually advanced in contrast to his American or Lebanese compatriots. For instance, *Almustafa*, or according to Gibran, who "means something special,

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p.xxvi.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. xxv.



the Chosen and the Beloved”<sup>89</sup>, suggests his own view on laws, which can be regarded as elements from the political field. Indeed, he says to those who seek to follow him:

Then a lawyer said, But what of our Laws, master?  
And he answered:  
You delight in laying down laws,  
Yet you delight more in breaking them.<sup>90</sup>

In this poem, *Almustafa* accuses lawyers of being corrupt and untrustworthy. In fact, he confronts them with their hypocrisy for they seldom defend their own principles. Indeed, lawyers, according to him, have learnt the art of deception and have acquired the skills to justify their means as long as the suspect is proven innocent, whether he or she had, in reality, committed an offense or not. Thus, although lawyers were educated in order to respect the law, which by definition guarantees the liberty and justice of people in a nation, they actually became masterful in altering it to their own benefits regardless of the moral or human core of their doing. Therefore, they learned the law, and simply broke it with “delight”. This is a form of corruption that the prophet in the book seeks to debunk, and he seems to be the only man who understands what is happening. In this situation, *Almustafa* and Khalid seem to agree for the latter criticizes the misuse of American democracy and its destruction in front of the shame caused by corrupt Tammanyites, while the former engages in addressing corruption by lawyers, who are supposed to defend the innocent and not raise the power of the unvirtuous over the purity of the honest. Thus, it can be understood that both Gibran and Rihani bring to life two characters, *Almustafa* and Khalid, in order to emphasize their exceptional ability to see the unseen, and debunk the immoral or –in this context- what is politically unacceptable.

It is known that Khalil Gibran and Ameen Rihani are friends whose relationship reaches back to Gibran’s days in Paris. Indeed, that latter perceived Rihani as a mentor and as a great influence, which explains Gibran’s thematic choices and the creation of his intellectually-exiled *Almustafa*. Moreover, it could be noticed that space in *Khalid* reflects the political exile of the protagonist. As a matter of fact, Khalid’s constant movement from a place to the other and from one country to another reflects his physical and psychological instability. By this movement, Rihani explains the desire of the hero to belong to all places at the same time. Indeed, this spatial dynamism consisting in Khalid’s first voyage to the New World, his return to Lebanon, and his eventual disappearance in the Egyptian desert, mirrors Khalid’s position

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<sup>89</sup> Hilu, Virginia. *Beloved Prophet: the Love Letters of Khalil Gibran and Mary Haskell and Her Private Journal*. London. Alfred Knopf, 1972. p344.

<sup>90</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *The Prophet, A new Annotated Edition*, Oneworld Publications, 2012. p. 45.

as a person who is in constant search for the unreachable ideal, which is to wake both nations up from their hypnotic conformity. In “Edward Said and the Space of Exile”, John Barbour writes that: “Exile is a way of dwelling in space with a constant awareness that one is not at home. The exile is oriented to a distant place and feels that he does not belong where he lives. Exile is also an orientation to time, a plotting of one's life story around a pivotal event of departure and a present condition of absence from one's native land.”<sup>91</sup> This description means that Khalid is in a state of an unending search for his final refuge -which is not material nor geographical, but rather intellectual and philosophical- and which he never achieves.

Therefore, Gibran and Rihani both constituted characters whose unusual intellect is involved with deciphering and resolving the human dilemma that lies in political corruption mainly and other deviations. Their ways of thinking and their teachings uprooted them from the prevalent traditional thinking of the time. Khalid was not ready to sink into betraying American democracy, nor was Almustafa ready to live in a state of conformity that does not allow him to view the deformed reality of human beings. Indeed, they both are characterized with an uncommon insight by which they are marginalized and persecuted. For instance, in *Spirits Rebellious*, Khalil Gibran writes that “Man built a narrow and painful prison in which he secluded his affections and desire. He dug out a deep grave in which he buried his heart and its purpose”<sup>92</sup>. By this statement, Gibran concludes that humans have forgotten about the essential role of their emotions, have disregarded the true meaning of their humanity, and have neglected the noble purposes for which humans live. They, indeed, embraced an egocentric materialism at the expense of truthfulness and honesty. Consequently, these characters built by Gibran and Rihani are doomed to live among the untruthful and to survive in a jungle-like world where corruptive laws rule and people blindly follow the mainstream.

## **2. Intellectual Exile as a Consequence of a Hybrid Identity.**

Hybridity is one of the most fundamental themes that underline *Khalid* and, consequently, give substance to the protagonist's identity as a dualistic entity combining both features from the East and the West. Khalid is a hybrid character who is not content with one simple,

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<sup>91</sup> Barbour, John. D. “Edward Said and the Space of Exile”. Oxford University Press.2007.p.293.

<sup>92</sup> Gibran, Khalil. *Spirits Rebellious*. Translated from Arabic by Anthony R. Ferris. Philosophical Library.1947. p.28. (originally published 1908).

traditional definition of himself. He is rather a person who joins together, in the same self, two cultures, two poles of identification, and maybe is in the process of cultivating more identities. Indeed, he perceives himself to be the inhabitant of a spiritual world of his own creative imagination. This is a sign exhibiting that Khalid no longer feels the necessity of belonging to a specific area or adhering to a single mindset, rather, he is now an exile who is compelled to draw for himself the utopian place that suits his aspirations, that is conceptualized in his mind, and in which all of his dreams -of ending corruption and reaching into the heavenly essence of humans - would materialize. In a message to his fellow Man, Khalid writes: “Look up, therefore, and behold this World-Temple, which, to us, shall be a resting place, and not a goal. On the border-line of the Orient and the Occident it is built, on the mountain-heights overlooking both.”<sup>93</sup> Here, Khalid reinforces his point of view by stressing the fact that his everlasting homeland and nation will be one where both cultures are interwoven and no distinctions are made, except for humanity as a quality uniting all. It would be sacred because it will be peaceful and receptive of people whose representations of themselves are built on the pillars of a multiplicity of cultures such as Khalid. This sense of hybridity generates this type of thinking, and strengthens Khalid’s position as an exile in contrast to the normative and one-sided identity. Indeed, being a cultural hybrid, not by birth, but by experience and reflection, conceives a character unwilling to completely assimilate to either country or mode of perception. Therefore, the sense of exile is born. Besides, it could be understood that Khalid is in constant search for “the Fountain of Truth”<sup>94</sup> by venturing to mold an identity that suits his emotional exile. Indeed, by embracing both cultures, adopting new principles, and composing a new perception about both the Lebanese and American politics, Khalid’s exile can be further fortified by comprehending that the protagonist’s identity is in perpetual development and growth. According to Majken Schultz:

For Gilles Deleuze, identity always comes after process. Even when it has arrived, through multiple geneses, identity is never free of process. Identity as such, identity as being, identity as stable, and identity as complete representation are therefore mere illusions. There is no identity as such independent of the processes making and unmaking it. No identified organization has a final and determined being; it is always a multiplicity of becoming [...] Life is led to the full when it maximizes its expression of the multiplicity of becoming giving rise to fleeting identities. There has to be identity for the expression of difference, but its task

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<sup>93</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Company, New York.1911.p.9.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* p.108.

is to test how far it can stretch itself without destroying its power to bring becoming into life.  
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Schultz asserts that Deleuze, a French philosopher, defines the identity of a person as being not static and frozen from the day he was born to the time of his death. Rather, it is ever changing and is subjected to innovation depending on the person's experience. Identity is merely not stagnant. It changes along with the person's experiences, and acquires a new and different definition each time an event surges in the life of the human being. Indeed, it is more of an expression of difference, exceptionality, and continuous evolution rather than a mere reference to one's personal history. Identity is there not because it has the obligatory task to confine someone to a strict mode of representation, but it rather exists to express the development of a person's psychological, intellectual, and philosophical faculties that results out of experience. In this context, Khalid's experience lies in his immigration and voyages from Lebanon, America and Egypt.

Moreover, Khalid's identity is movable, depending on the events he goes through during his journey. For instance, he renounces peddling for he considers it a job of those who deceive. He also engages in political activities and discovers the manipulation of democratic values to the benefit of corrupt leaders, and travels in the middle of the desert, afraid of being persecuted for his opinions, considered by the Eastern community to be heretical and scandalously rebellious. This chain of events necessarily causes Khalid's disenchantment with others' reactions and compels him to unconsciously follow an identity that is multidimensional and compatible with the turmoil in his life. Therefore, being a hybrid means also being introduced as a person of multiple identities that grow and flourish with the intensity of the experience. This leads to the emergence of a feeling of distantiation and estrangement in comparison to others – who are less likely to embrace Khalid's peculiar lifestyle – which eventually leads to being exiled on an intellectual level. In this situation, identity can indeed manifest itself in Khalid's experiences, but it can also be embodied through Khalid's literary discourse and utterances. As a matter of fact, *the Book of Khalid* is fraught with expressions derived from the Arabic language and, specifically, the Syrian/Lebanese local dialect which appears intertwined with the English language. This intermingling of English and Arabic hints at Khalid's ambivalence and at his attempts to bring into existence an unprecedented identity expressing the hero's internal hybridity and in-

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<sup>95</sup> Schultz, Majken. *Constructing Identity in and Around Organizations*. Oxford University Press. 2012. p.181.

betweenness. It also stresses the sense of the fragmentation of Khalid's psyche between two disparate cultures he seeks to interweave together. In giving voice to Khalid, the Editor, or even Shakib, Rihani, considering his Arab-American background, does not relinquish an identity at the expense of the other. On the contrary, even when he produces a literary work of art such as this multilayered *Book of Khalid*, he unveils, chapter after another, the process of Khalid's construction of identity. It should be noticed that Rihani/Khalid express their sense of exile, as a consequence of the process of hybridization they both went through. On a stylistic level, the term "hybridity" is defined by Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin, in his essay entitled "Discourse in the Novel", as such:

What is hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. Such mixing of two languages within the boundaries of a single utterance is, in the novel, an artistic device (or more accurately, a system of devices) that is deliberate.<sup>96</sup>

This definition applies to Rihani's intentional mixing of both Arabic and English on both the formal and the thematic levels. Indeed, his style seems to incarnate Bakhtin's theory of literary hybridization of language. This alludes to the author's psychological hybridity which expresses a sense of exile because he continually strives to create a unique system of language that is harmonious with his personal dream of a bicultural and Arab-American world. For instance, in "Book The Second" entitled "In The Temple", the author gives a voice to his character expressed in the English language but tinged with an Arabic spirit. For instance, he creates an utterance in which the frame is American but the context is purely Eastern. Khalid writes "': "Awafy' (Allah give you strength), I said, greeting them. 'And increase of health to you', they replied [...] Allah preserve you in your strength, my Brothers."<sup>97</sup> In this utterance, Rihani uses a transliteration and introduces its meaning. The latter does not necessarily correspond to the American cultural context, but is rather harmonious with the Lebanese discourse. As an example, the meaning of "Allah give you strength" is more convenient an expression when translated into Arabic. It can be thus concluded that the typical English sentence that would be more suitable to the American atmosphere would probably be "may God give you strength", rather than what Rihani utilizes in the former example. Also, concerning the other utterance, the equivalent in American for "And increase of health to you" would approximately be "May God keep you healthy", for instance. However, Rihani

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<sup>96</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail. M. *The Dialogic Imagination*. University of Texas Press.1981.p.358.

<sup>97</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. New York. 1911. p.176.

deliberately discards these obvious structures and designs a hybrid literary discourse of his own to pin down his character's relentless attempt at highlighting his belonging to both cultures, consequently organizing a new system of speech peculiar to his linguistically-exiled persona.

To conclude this part, it should be mentioned that Khalid's hybridity is not merely related to his representation of his geographical belonging. It is rather a matter of psychological and linguistic association to his journey throughout the East and the West, motored by an identity that is ever changing and searching for its divine "World-Temple".

### **3. Symptoms of an Exiled Khalid: Nostalgia.**

In *the Book of Khalid*, nostalgia occupies a great period of both the author and the main character's lives. As Lebanese immigrants to the United States, both Rihani and Khalid mirror a sense of homesickness, solitude, and bitter melancholy related to their situation as being away from their geographical and natural place of birth, childhood, and Eastern culture. Moreover, nostalgia does not only express itself as a sentiment of rejoicing into recalling the past events they lived, or not only does it represent searching for the faces of people whom they grew up with in the remote villages of Mount Lebanon, and who trigger, by the sight of them, memories. Rather, it is a sentiment that encompasses for Khalid/Rihani, the history of the East, the yearning for an honest American political system, and Lebanon under Ottoman colonization. Mostly, it paves the way for readers to recognize that Rihani and Khalid are nostalgic to glory, to correct and honest democracy, to the independence of a persecuted East, and to the establishment of a cultural harmony between the East and the West. Nostalgia is a sudden feeling that invades the writer each time he seeks to prove that Khalid is longing for the creation of an unknown world of his own. Moreover, being nostalgic for both the author and the protagonist leads directly to the discovery that, through this psychological state of being, exile is a natural consequence to it. It is also a double-way equation. For an exiled subject would be stormed by nostalgia as an aftereffect to the burden of solitude expressed by his exiled mind and soul. Nostalgia, as a term, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "A sentimental longing or wistful affection for a period in the past."<sup>98</sup> Thus, it appears to be bound by a specific previous time. Although this definition perfectly fits into some of

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<sup>98</sup> Oxford English Dictionary <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/nostalgia>

Khalid/Rihani's moments in the book, it can also take a larger dimension that occupies a notion of time not restricted to the past, present, or future. Rather, Khalid is always nostalgic, always in the act of seeking to find something lost, and is always being inquisitive of matters he is longing to explain or realize. The term "always" qualifies for a non-traditional dissection of time. Indeed, it is the perpetual and immortal moment of the triumph of his morality against political corruption that Khalid is nostalgic for. Briefly, he is not nostalgic for a specific event that occurred at a particular moment in the past; rather, he is nostalgic for his own political and spiritual principles that have not yet been taken into consideration by his surroundings, whether in the past, in the present, or the future. Besides, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the etymology of the word goes back to a combination of the Greek 'nostos', which means "return home", and 'algos' which refers to "pain". Thus, nostalgia is a state of being that entails a painful recollection of something or the tormenting act of trying to find meaning and existence throughout a larger scope of time. Rihani, in his book *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*, describes a state of nostalgia while walking in the Egyptian desert. In an introspective, melancholic tone, he asks questions about a glorious past that had vanished, while the space is still alive:

Alas! Where are the roses which the prime Of summer share  
With the sesame, the myrtle and the thyme  
In meadows fair?  
Where is the sacred lotus and the bloom  
Of cumin and mimosa, whose perfume  
Once filled the shrine of Isis and her tomb?  
Where is the pomegranate flower that shone in Cleopatra's hair?<sup>99</sup>

In this poem entitled "In the Palm Groves of Memphis", Rihani meditates into the Egyptian natural scenery that used to represent the cradle of the Pharaonic Civilization. Indeed, it used to be fertile rather than barren. In his poem, Rihani romanticizes the desert in order to offer it back its moments of power and beauty of a time that had long passed. Rihani seems to eternalize the history of the empty space and attempts to revive the history of Ancient Egypt when the country used to boast of a political autonomy and challenge other empires. He also makes reference to Isis, the Egyptian goddess of fertility, to highlight the greatness of a lost

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<sup>99</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*, James T. White and Co, New York, 1921 .p.43.

civilization characterized by control and steadiness in contrast to his days of the early twentieth century when Egypt is still under Ottoman rule. Thus, he wants to recollect a more optimistic picture of Egypt at the time through the emblem of the goddess and other natural elements such as “meadows”, “pomegranate”, and “roses” symbolic for proliferation and renewal. It should be mentioned that:

Traditionally, nostalgia has been conceptualized as a medical disease and a psychiatric disorder. Instead, we argue that nostalgia is a predominantly positive, self-relevant, and social emotion serving key psychological functions. Nostalgic narratives reflect more positive than negative affect, feature the self as the protagonist, and are embedded in a social context. Nostalgia is triggered by dysphoric states such as negative mood and loneliness. Finally, nostalgia generates positive affect, increases self esteem, fosters social connectedness, and alleviates existential threat.<sup>100</sup>

In this provided definition of nostalgia, the authors seem to explain that it can be considered as pathological on the psychological level. Yet, they are more prone to emphasize its beneficial effects on the person as a healing factor by which the protagonist, in this context, develops a psyche and mind that are both conscious of a certain meaning of his or her existence. Therefore, nostalgia helps Khalid/Rihani grasp their meaning of life, which basically lies in the belief in the glory of the East and its ability to surpass violence and colonization, and in the complete capability of the East to infuse spirituality into a materialistic West that had already become stiff and uncompromising to Khalid. Indeed, “the strenuous spirit is a long time dead in Khalid. He is gradually reverting to the Oriental instinct.”<sup>101</sup> The Oriental part of his spirit seems to drag him further into a nostalgic bubble in which he retreats, at times willingly and at others reluctantly, into exile. For instance, in his encounter with a *Huria* --which is the corresponding name in Arabic for a “beautiful virgin woman”—during his libertine days, the protagonist is perpetually surrounded by an Eastern aura which magnetically drives him towards elements or events originating from his culture or country of origin. While he exchanges a dialogue with “the Mistress, a fair-looking, fair-spoken dame of seven lustrums or more”, she recognizes his Oriental complexion and engages in a nostalgic conversation with him. Indeed, she treats him as one of the Syrian kings of the past and confesses: “One day we shall travel together in the Orient; we shall visit the ruins of vanished kingdoms and creeds. Ah, to be in Palmyra with you! Do you know,

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<sup>100</sup> Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, and Routledge. “Nostalgia: Past, Present, and Future.” Sage Publications. 2008. p.304.

<sup>101</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. New York. 1911. p.56.



Child, I am destined to be a Beduin queen. The throne of Zenobia is mine and yours too, if you will be good. We shall resuscitate the glory of the kingdom of the desert.”<sup>102</sup>

First, it should be invoked that Khalid, in this situation, imagines himself as being in Heaven—specifically, the Islamic version of Heaven—for it is mentioned in the Holy book of the Islamic religion, *the Quran*, that pious men would be rewarded with the company of chaste women in the afterlife. Indeed, in the Quranic text, God speaks thus “For those who reverence the majesty of their Lord, two gardens [...] which of your Lord’s marvels can you deny? Their beautiful mates were never touched by any human or jinn.”<sup>103</sup> This probably alludes to deciphering Khalid’s nostalgia for a future when religions would someday be united and the Christian Maronite, along with the Muslim are offered the same treats in heaven based only on their humanity and piety. Second, in the Huri’s discourse, there is an apparent longing for the pre-historic era from ancient Syria, when the Aramaic Syrian queen Zenobia once used to be the ruler of Mesopotamia, parts of modern-day Turkey, and Egypt, with Palmyra (modern-day Syria, Homs Governorate) as its location of control. The dame with which Khalid spends his night seems to overwhelm him with the collective memory of the entire Syrian people, and uses that method of nostalgia-triggering for she observes it to be an effective and successful method of seduction. Finally, the “Orientalization” of the encounter between Khalid and the mistress—whether through his vision of heaven or her picturesque depiction of ancient Syria-- constitutes one of the ways used by Rihani to highlight the nostalgia produced by the protagonist.

Thus, nostalgia, to Khalid, does not establish itself as a pathology as much as it demonstrates Khalid’s endeavour to unite Syria and America, to depict both Lebanon and the United States to readers in a romanticized, orientalized manner through everything he interacts with, to witness the independence of his birthplace, and to revitalize his conception of an exiled character who seeks to cope with his case by being nostalgic.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to understand that Khalid sought to implement his defiant—deemed heretical and revolutionary-- and groundbreaking views on American politics and the political situation in his home country into both areas in order to infuse a reformist spirit within the people, and incite whoever was around him to question and doubt the treacherous mainstream. He was the only figure in his society to strive to voice his

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.* p.86.

<sup>103</sup> *Quran* 55:46-47-56. Translated from the original by Rashad Khalifa, Ph.D. United Community of Submitters.2007.

indignation against the subordination of Greater Syria to Ottoman tyranny. Also, he was the one to denounce the dependence of the United States to a materialist creed that led the country to conspicuously acquire a corrupt image of its system that contradicts the principles of true social democracy advanced by the founding fathers, which is the democracy of the spirit before the traditional popular vote. Moreover, Khalid, with this contrast remaining revived in his thoughts, became compelled to achieve a compromising solution by which he would be able to reconcile himself with both identities without being obliged to disregard them nor be perceived as a complete outcast. This desire to blend the Arab-American spheres into one identity conceived a sense of exile in the intellectual and it simultaneously coupled with his dream of bringing into life an original identification of himself: the Eastern-Western man. Indeed, Rihani portrays and reflects his aspiration for America and Lebanon on Khalid's thinking, and envisions Khalid as a spokesperson for his perceptions and his convictions. This book is far from being a pseudo-autobiography, nor is it a biography in itself. Rather, it is the story of fictional Khalid, whose origins and experience highly resemble Rihani's, yet, the latter forged him in order to indirectly leak his vision of the world, and make of him a voyager whose intellect expands with the growth of his experience. Khalid also carries along with him his Eastern nostalgia; a feeling harmoniously transposed onto an American lifestyle. In addition, this nostalgia is far from being considered as the traditional painful feeling that submerges a person when they are lonely or exiled. In fact, it is to be viewed as nostalgia to the future and a craving expressed by Khalid for his new double-sided identity. Despite Khalid and Rihani's attempts to decorate America with a description from Oriental folklore mainly reminiscent of Scheherazade's *One Thousand and One Nights*, the protagonist still suffers a sense of exile originating from his inability to practically and thoroughly apply his vision onto America and Syria. Thus, Rihani searches for a path of freedom to liberate himself and his counterpart Khalid from the despotic control of the Ottoman Empire over thoughts and beliefs, and from the fanatical frenzy of the excessively materialist world of money: The United States. He wants to find, through this freedom, the politically independent Syria and the softened, humane America. Indeed, he writes:

O Freedom, though thy price be high,  
Though one for thee his life must seal  
I would once more beneath thy sky

Brandish my sharp and shining steel.<sup>104</sup>

This freedom Rihani seeks is the one that would destroy the confined and limited thinking of the narrow-minded people, especially concerning their situation under a tyranny, or in what regards their existence under the shadow of a materialist country. Also, it is the freedom through which Khalid/ Rihani appropriate the new identity and discard exile. Finally, it is the freedom by which Khalid would pursue his fight against the shackles of religious politicization, and form his own view about religious belief as a secular transcendentalist.

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<sup>104</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*, James T. White and Co, New York, 1921 .p.76.

*II) Spiritual Exile: Khalid's  
Formulation of a New World Picture.*

## A) Institutionalized Religion and the Tyranny of the Maronite Church.

Rihani, like the character in his novel, was brought up in the Maronite community of Lebanon. According to *the Encyclopedia of the Peoples of Africa and the Middle East*:

The defining cultural characteristic of the Maronites is membership of the Maronite Church, and the people are often referred to as Maronite Christians. The Maronite Church is one of the Christian Eastern Catholic churches. It was founded in the fifth century by Saint Maron, a monk born in present-day Syria who lived in the Taurus Mountains of present-day southern Turkey. According to Maronite tradition, Saint Maron's followers migrated into the mountains of present-day Lebanon following his death. From that time the mountains of Lebanon have been the spiritual heartland of the Maronites and have also frequently served as a retreat or fortress in the face of invasion and persecution.<sup>105</sup>

Yet, Khalid did not always identify with the tenets of his religion. He rather believed that the harmony of the world was based on the unification of all creeds and the consideration of a God who is dedicated and devoted to humanity, regardless of any other minor differences that exist among people's backgrounds. He was searching for a God free from all the shackles of institutionalization and worldly corrupted laws. Indeed, Khalid sent a letter to God:

In the religious systems of mankind, I sought thee, O God, In vain; in their machine-made dogmas and theologies [...] in their churches and temples and mosques [...] the lisping infant races of this Earth, when will they learn to pronounce thy name entire? [...] the various dissonances in thy name shall be reduced, for the sake of the enfant races of the Earth, to perfect harmony.<sup>106</sup>

Thus, Khalid denounces institutions that tarnish God's name for the sake of their own members' personal benefits, especially those who were at the origins of his estrangement and who exiled him. They led to his separation from Najma, his beloved cousin, and ultimately, his excommunication. They were also the cause of Khalid's shock of established religion, which distanced him spiritually and intellectually from his community.

### 1. The Politicization of Religious Belief: Being Exiled from Faith.

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<sup>105</sup> Stokes, Jamie. *The Peoples of Africa and the Middle East*. InfoBase Publishing Inc 2009. p.446.

<sup>106</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*, Dodd, Mead, and Co. New York. 1911. p.201.

When religious belief is said to be politicized, this basically refers to the fact that religion, as a system of faith and as a metaphysical idea -- by which human beings find seemingly logical explanations for their existence and strive to decipher the natural enigma of death-- no longer remains a spiritual practice relating Man to a God in all its forms, and is no longer to be considered a vertical relationship linking the Creator to the created nor associating the Venerated to the Venerator by means of personal convictions. It is rather transformed into a tool for manipulating the mind, the community, and the laws of the state .This might be regarded as rather an effortless task by rulers, despots, tyrannical Kings, and a large portion of Priests, Sheikhs or any other religious representatives. For religion, as a deeply-rooted cultural phenomenon, has already penetrated into the common identity of a certain social group, has also established itself as a source of inspiration, and has created a lawful and powerful discourse which is quite difficult for the majority of followers to deny or falsify. That is why each believer is ready to commit to any act or to any order as long as it is in its name, and as long as it serves his or her religious affiliation. In fact, the politicization of religion generally traces its roots in the situation of vulnerability a believer finds himself in when demanded to conduct an action that is apparently linked to his or her faith, for, indeed, he or she would fear the wrath of God upon them if this demand is ever refused by a person, especially when convinced that such a requirement would trigger the rage of God if never enacted. Those who instrumentalise religion take advantage of this weak position people admit in comparison to their maker/makers and encroach upon their fear as a facilitating tool for them to mold these people's thoughts and viewpoints about their lives, as long as distorters of religion persuade them that what they suggest does not contradict with their religious system and would not stray them away from the path of goodness and devotion. For instance, both Christian and Islamic theocracies are to be referred to as examples of ruling in the name of religious belief. As for the latter, Islamic states and groups believe that "Sharia" is the rightful set of laws to be followed in a country of Muslim majority, regardless of any other constitution. As for the former, ecclesiocracy is the domineering system which means the rule of a higher religious hierarchy and which follows religious tenets as the source of its power and domination. Moreover, politicized religion becomes a way to make monetary benefits or to gain authority and maintain it, which renders it void of its original spiritual purposes—which are generally only supposed to manifest in the honest and selfless allegiance of a person to a specific deity he or she regards to be the dawn of authority-- . For example, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, he recounts what is entitled as the 'The Pardoner's Tale'. In the Roman Catholic Church, Pardoners are people who sell relics, indulgences, and written pardons to

other people whom they believe are sinners. Indeed, these people unhesitatingly buy their own salvation. This practice seems to be devoid of all spiritual causes, and it is a manifestation of the transformation of religion into a business dealing rather than remain a true act of repentance. Traditionally, religion transcends any worldly, materialistic, and egocentric transactions. Yet, Chaucer shows that it had dropped from its original spiritual hierarchy and thus, people became exiles of their own faith. Indeed, the pardoner starts his tale by introducing himself as a treacherous, greedy, and dishonest man:

My patent with the bishop's seal I show  
To help safeguard my person as I go.  
That no man be so bold, though priest or clerk,  
As to obstruct me in Christ's holy work [...]  
"And then I show to them like precious stones  
My long glass cases crammed with rags and bones,  
For these are relics (so they think)." <sup>107</sup>

Here, the pardoner confesses to selling false relics and seems to believe that he is, nevertheless, applying the orders of Christ. Thus, he uses Christianity for his benefits because he is knowledgeable that other people whom he is addressing are free from doubt in what concerns his discourse, especially that he protected himself by asserting that what he is advancing is inspired by the orders of Christ. Therefore, he easily justifies his vices and paves the way for his deceptive maneuvering for he only refers to the highest authority in Christianity to be the source of all his conduct, which compels the commoners to undeniably and undoubtedly accept his claims. As for Rihani, religion should be regarded as a unifying, spiritual, and purifying magnet for the human soul, and if it ever deviates from this path of human trust between God and Man, or Man and his fellow Man, it only becomes a pit for destruction, confessionism, persecution, and division. He explains:

Of all the places of worship I know,-- and I have lugged my unshrived soul and my weary limbs into many a foreign temple,-- the mosque has always impressed me as being by far the most democratic and the most unstinted in its varied hospitalities. There is nothing in it or in its economy to flatter the rich, or offend the poor, to repel the weary, or distract the devout[...]the solace it affords is no bread-and-cheese affair[...]the mosque is a haven of rest

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<sup>107</sup> Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales* (Ecker, Ronald L. & Crook. Eugene J. Trans).Hodge and Braddock, Publishers.1993.  
Retrieved from <http://english.fsu.edu/canterbury/index.html#Contents>

to beggar and prince, a temple of democracy to the Faithful, a divine hostelry for the children of Allah[...]here the outcast finds a stone, at least, on which to lay his head[...] Allah forgive me for what I have here set down. I came to this church to pray, not to cavil [...] Come, my Christian Brother,--come with me to the mosque.<sup>108</sup>

In his statement, Rihani takes the example of the mosque, which is the sacred place where Muslims worship God, as a witness to a utopian corner where sacredness and spirituality hover upon those who frequent it, and where no distinctions are made between the people under its roof. Rihani recounts a brief exchange between him and a genuine Muslim Sheikh: ““You are not a Muslem,” said the distinguished Sheikh, detecting in me an alien manner. “I too worship Allah,” I replied, lacing my shoes, “and honor the Prophets”. Whereupon he invited me to his house for lunch. Strangers meeting in the mosque become brothers.”<sup>109</sup> Thus, for Rihani, religion is a mere bridge for human connection and fruitful interaction if it is bound and directed by a spiritual engine. It should not be based upon hatred and excluding others. Rather, it should teach people how to embrace others’ differences because they are all to be considered the proof of the existence of one God, the God who made them. Corruption in religion stands out when the latter proves itself to be the source of all evils in society and when its core seems to be devoid of spirituality and fraught with nothing but an egoistic tendency towards amassing money and controlling the people . Indeed:

As a young Lebanese immigrant coming of age in the United States, Rihani found himself suspended between two worlds. At one extreme was the “East,” his original homeland of Lebanon, Syria, and the larger Arab World, which seemed to him a repository of numerous virtues and vices. His East was soulful, spiritual, and full of heart, yet stagnant, occupied, and bond by repressive traditions.<sup>110</sup>

Rihani perceives religion as the cause of the atrocities emanating from society, especially in his home country. This means, for him, that it lacks a spiritual dimension, which is supposed to be the primary feature that would save it from creating its own abyss and tarnishing its own message: An abyss of treachery, of discord between the many factions of one religion, and of retrogression and narrow-mindedness. Basically, if religious thought is exiled from inner-faith, what remains of it is the proclivity of the human mind for isolation and enclosure in

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<sup>108</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Path of Vision*. James T. White and Co. 1921.p144-145-146-155.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.* p.148.

<sup>110</sup> Funk, Nathan C. “More than Tolerance: Rihani on Intercultural Reconciliation” In Funk, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. p. 5. (Paraphrased from Rihani’s Essay: “From Brooklyn Bridge”.)



regards to what is the Other. Indeed, according to Abdul Aziz Said, “to escape this narrow thinking, we need inspiration from those who have sought to manifest a different vision in their lives, and who have demonstrated the desirability of regarding the world from a standpoint of *abundance* rather than a standpoint of scarcity. This was, in essence, the spiritual vision that animated Ameen Rihani’s life”<sup>111</sup>. Said explains that this “position of scarcity”<sup>112</sup> is equated to the fact that there is “not enough truth, greatness, beauty, nobility, and creativity to go around”<sup>113</sup>. He also explains his notion of scarcity to be the situation where Man divides himself according to his or her religious belonging and where humanity is insensibly classified into people with opposing beliefs, which creates a “religiously based clash of civilizations”<sup>114</sup>. As a matter of fact, Rihani sought to transcend this limited thinking by separating religion from spirituality – NOT in the sense where religion is lacking in spirituality—but in a broader perspective where the spirituality of religion does not remain confined within this singular frame of belief, and in a manner where this spirituality shifts to other human realms of thinking and perception other than religiosity. “For Rihani, spirituality meant reaffirmation of transcendence, the spirit’s quest for ultimate reality [...] Spiritual transcendence balances power with humility, and provides connection with larger meaning and purpose. As Rihani recognized, moving from a religious to a spiritual framework allows us to relocate our most basic, inherited assumptions in ways which can free us to untangle ourselves from our present circumstances and move toward our shared, collective destiny.”<sup>115</sup> Indeed, Rihani holds that spirituality can touch any other human streams of reflection and assumption. As Abdul Aziz Said confirms:

“Ameen Rihani anticipated the contemporary tendency to perceive a distinction between spirituality and religion. Although these terms are often used somewhat interchangeably, there is a difference between them that is captured well in Rihani’s perception “we can be religious without religiosity”.<sup>116</sup> This alludes to the fact that a human being can add a tinge of spirituality on any level and not superficially imprison it in a constructed system of belief.

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<sup>111</sup> Said, Abdulaziz. ‘Understanding Peace through Rihani’s Spirituality’ In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. p.113.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p. 114.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

To conclude, when religion deviates from its noble path based upon the appreciation of the Divine without any expectations of the material or the worldly by humans, it is converted into a path for the corrupt, such as Khalid's case with the Maronite Church—an example for the institutionalization of Christianity-- . In following such a path, nations are ruined and the human mind and soul betray their inner-goodness. However, Rihani suggests that even if spirituality deserts religion, there will maybe solace in the fact that spirituality “frees us from narrow commitments and allegiances by directing us to a [...] more essential scale of values,”<sup>117</sup> manifested in the ability of the human spirit to be the birthplace of “a commitment which may or may not be informed by allegiance to a particular religion”.<sup>118</sup>

## **2. The Tyranny of the Maronite Church in *the Book of Khalid*.**

Rihani sought to portray this institutionalization of religion through the example of Khalid's relation to the Maronite Church --that embodied the religious authority representing his community—and to Christianity in general. Indeed, after Khalid's return to Lebanon and after an agitated experience full of turmoil in the United States, his vision of the church deteriorated. This shift in perception caused Khalid's exile vis-à-vis his family, his origins, and himself. He is no longer the Maronite Khalid in neither thought nor soul. He is now forging a new altered awareness in his religious perspective, which is gradually liberating his deeply-rooted old convictions which were saturated with a traditional view of the power and the hegemony of the church order. For him, the Maronite authority reflected an unworthy and distorted image of what religious thought should incarnate and how it should be manifested among people. He realized that the church has been replaced by spiritual transcendence in what regards his view of spirituality and religion. The latter is defined by Emile Durkheim as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden, beliefs and practices which unite into one single community called a church, all those who adhere to them.”<sup>119</sup> This definition implies that the church's basic function is to control people by providing them with coherency and strong communal bonds which gives them the allusion of being protected. Furthermore, the church established itself as a commanding ecclesiastical body that seeks to camouflage the corruptive intentions that lied behind its picture of a system that encourages piety and obeys the heavenly orders of the Christ. For instance, and against the will of the church, Khalid wanted to marry his cousin

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<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.* p.115.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Crawford, Robert. *What is Religion?* Routledge. 2002. London.p.2-3.

Najma in the name of Love. Yet, as an Easterner, marriage among cousins and far relatives, especially in the Arab World—as long as they are not siblings evidently—is a common practice and is not regarded as a shameful, perverse, or an incestuous act. Contrarily to the culture and customs in the West—in which this bond of matrimony is, most of the time, regarded as forbidden, scandalous, and disgraceful—the Islamic communities, for example, do not show any kind of scorn towards the desire for a male to be bonded with his female cousin in the holy ceremony of marriage—. And because Khalid/ Rihani considers himself as a citizen of the Arab world in part,—within his larger formation of a dual identity—he does not seem to scoff at his own proposition and rather fights for his beloved. As Dr Nijmeh Hajjar expresses it, “It was with vividness, pride, and unwavering courage that Ameen Rihani pronounced what I call his “tri-centric” belonging, and he repeatedly called upon his compatriots to follow his example. Summarizing a life commitment to the Arab homeland and culture and to world society, to “universal humanity” [...]”<sup>120</sup> Both Rihani and Khalid reflect this inner Arab nationalist fervor, assume that Christians and Muslims occupy a large part of the history of the region, and they both equally have a common history that united them in one territory. Thus, the Eastern or Syro-Lebanese Christians are in direct contact with the Muslims and vice versa. Indeed, Rihani—as much as Khalid— explains one of the multiple sides of his identity “I am a Lebanese, volunteering in the service of the Arab homeland, and we all belong to it. I am an Arab volunteering in the service of humanity, and we all belong to it.”<sup>121</sup> However, Khalid/ Rihani’s exile never appears to reach an end. It found its birthplace in his heart when he left his homeland for the first time and grew attached to an independent, strong country. His exile acquired meaning by means of geographical and intellectual distance and was fueled by the degree of difference Lebanon and America were characterized with, especially on the political and religious levels. Indeed, the United States was home for a plethora of religious digressions, but none of it was to interfere in the personal affairs of neither the people nor the government’s political decisions. On the contrary, the United States adopted religious tolerance and incorporated the separation of Church and State. Now, sentiments of exile followed him back to Baalbek (Heliopolis or *Madinat A’Shams*), the land

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<sup>120</sup> Hajjar, Nijmeh. « Ameen Rihani’s Humanist Vision of Arab Nationalism » In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. p.134.

<sup>121</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *Al-Tatarruf wal-Islah, al-A’mal al-‘Arabiyya al-Kamila*. Al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabiyya lil-Dirasat wal-Nashr.p.477.

(Translation from Arabic: Rihani, Ameen. *Extremism and Reform, the Full Arab Works*. The Arab Association for Studies and Publishing .p.477.)

of the sun. Here, his religious exile became more tangible and external. Now more than ever, the light of his *Najma* (star in Arabic and the name of his beloved) --and their dream together of making a family—is on the verge of fading because of a selfish intervention by Maronite representatives, who already disdain Khalid. In a chapter entitled “Priesto- Parental”, Khalid visualizes—while criticizing-- the pretenses of the Maronite church and their seemingly-neat image. He also denounces their parental stance and their unconditional belief in their own ability to control minds:

“Where one has so many Fathers,” he writes, “and all are pretending to be the guardians of his spiritual and material well-being, one ought to renounce them all at once. It was not with a purpose to rejoin my folk that I first determined to return to my native country. For, while I believe in the Family, I hate Familism, which is the curse of the human race. And I hate this spiritual Fatherhood when it puts on the garb of a priest, the three-cornered hat of a Jesuit, the hood of a monk, the gaberdine of a rabbi, or the jubbah of a sheikh. The sacredness of the Individual, not of the Family or the Church, do I proclaim. For Familism, or the propensity to keep under the same roof, as a social principle, out of fear, ignorance, cowardice, or dependence, is, I repeat, the curse of the world.”<sup>122</sup>

According to Khalid, the local religious authority advances its control while hiding under its apparel a hypocritical sentiment vis-à-vis the Lebanese society and the spiritual dimension of Maronite Christianity. Indeed, the priests are seeking their own interests and are simultaneously betraying their faith. For instance, Rihani writes in *Khalid*: “For the priesthood in Syria is not, as we have said, a peeled, polished, pulpy affair. And Khalid’s father has been long enough in their employ to learn somewhat of their methods. Bigotry, cruelty, and tyranny at home, priestcraft and Jesuitism abroad, -- these, O Khalid, you will know better by force of contact before you end.”<sup>123</sup> For example, Khalid, as a result for his apparent disinterest in attending church services after coming home from America, the Jesuits start to harbor a sense of vengeance as a consequence to his indifferent reaction. Indeed, people, after his return to Mount Lebanon, were flooded by curiosity. Shakib recounts the events in his story: “When I heard the people asking each other, “Why does he not come to Church like honest folks?” And soon I discovered that my apprehensions were well grounded; for the questioning was noised at Khalid’s door, and the fire crackled under the roof within.”<sup>124</sup> Besides, When ““A booklet was published in Beirut, setting forth the history of Ignatius

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<sup>122</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911. p.138.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* p.140.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*p.141.

Loyola and the purports and intents of Jesuitism”<sup>125</sup>, it is discovered by Khalid that it was the work of an anonymous author who distorted Scottish writer Thomas Carlyle’s Pamphlet entitled *Jesuitism* and written a disloyal translation of it, that eventually reached the Maronite priests. –knowing already that this was a mischievous deceptive plan fashioned by the Jesuits themselves to falsely accuse Khalid of blasphemy-- The original work by Carlyle is one that celebrates the members of the Society of Jesus’ feats and accomplishments for humanity, and praises their absolute devotion to God. Indeed, Carlyle writes: “A new revelation to mankind; not heard of in human experience, till Ignatius revealed it to us. That, in substance, was the contribution of Ignatius to the wellbeing of mankind.”<sup>126</sup> Despite Khalid’s attempts to prevent the Jesuits from an eventual misunderstanding that could lead to outrage, the members of the Maronite church deem that “The author of this blasphemous and pernicious Pamphlet [...] is doubly guilty of a most heinous crime.”<sup>127</sup>, and that “only an atheist and anarchist is capable of such villainous mendacity, such unutterable wickedness and treachery”<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, the tension between Khalid and the Jesuits heightens when they ask for money as a way to allow him to marry his cousin, or otherwise, he would be forever forbidden to unite with Najma. This apparent request, advanced by the church, concludes that the members do not pay as much attention to the Divine law as much as they respect money. Indeed, this demand by the church further reinforces its representatives’ loyalty to Mammon, rather to obedience and dedication to Christ. The Editor confirms: “Yes, the *ethos* of the Syrians, like that of the Americans, is essentially money-seeking. And whether in Beirut or New York, even the moralists and reformers, [...], will ask themselves, before they undertake to do anything for you or for their country, “What will this profit us?” And that is what Khalid once thought to oppose and end.”<sup>129</sup> Moreover, Khalid searches for the church’s concealed will to protect Man: “But let us return to what concerns us properly: the good of my soul, and the spiritual well-being of the community,--what becomes of these, when I pay the prescribed alms and obtain the sanction of the Bishop?”<sup>130</sup> In his statements, Khalid reflects upon the Jesuits’ intentions and unconsciously rebels upon their authority for he sees not the dignity of Christians preserved. Indeed, there is a reformist zeal that emanates from Khalid’s mind, and

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.* p.145.

<sup>126</sup> Carlyle, Thomas. « Jesuitism » in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Chapman and Hall. 1850. p. 250.

<sup>127</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.146.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*p.128.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p.161.

that adamantly refuses to settle with neither his humiliation nor the people's naïve perception of religion.

Thus, excommunication was the ultimate and final decision taken by an unjust and wrongful system. This event inaugurated Khalid's religious exile. He is now no longer a Christian, nor is he recognized by his family, which alludes to a sharp fraction in his old identity. Although Khalid was morally, symbolically, psychologically, and socially persecuted, the act of excommunicating him represented nothing but an evolution in his spiritual identity, and a clearer outlining of his view about established religion. Certainly, Khalid's religious devotion is no longer limited by the walls of a church or the icons of the Virgin Mary. Rather, it is now spread to humanity and nature. Also, by meditating into his unfortunate experience with the church, he grew aware of the necessity for Arab Secularism as a system that does not cause an overlap between objective laws and personal affairs. Under such a system, heresy and being an infidel would no longer shake the local community's peace of mind. Rather, these matters would become a private affair. Therefore, religious institutions would only be regarded with the real and authentic values of the faith, while laws would be applied to anyone who seeks to harass or violate the sanctity of individuals.

### **3. Secularism**

Secularism is generally defined as being the act of separating religious matters from state affairs in a country. It is not to be regarded as a religious or as a political system per se, rather, it is perceived as a compromise and solution that entails the non-overlapping of religious creeds with objective civil laws. In fact, not applying secularism in a state means that the civilians' lives are surrounded, organized, and built upon the tenets of a particular religion and no other, even if a geographical territory is defined by its ethnic and cultural varieties, including religious differences. This situation has always perfectly applied to the political sphere of the Arab World, and specifically to the Middle East and the Levant. Indeed, it is a territory known to be where Judaism, Christianity, and Islam first emerged, and as a consequence, many Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Arabs have always coexisted in it, despite the fact that Muslim subjects might have always represented a larger part of the population. The Arab World, have constantly been known, till our present day, to be a place dominated by tradition and religion in ways that led to the majority of its political systems to become inspired by religious laws and sectarian divisions in order for rulers to be able to lead the

states. For instance, in present-day Lebanon, the official political system of the country is based on confessionalism. Indeed, each political party is defined to be whether Christian or Muslim: Orthodox, Druze, Sunni, or Shia. There are representatives in the Parliament of Lebanon for each political faction in the country. This system implies that the act of disregarding any political group or the appearance of any type of conflict based on religious grounds would eventually lead to a civil war—which what actually took place in 1975--. Indeed, religion and politics are mostly intertwined and interwoven which ultimately brings about a blurry vision of the nature of a specific religion and does not clearly provide neither a definition nor an outlining of the basis of the political system applied, and entails along a questioning of its objectivity towards citizens. Thus, a system that does not draw the lines between faith and state affairs is not a trustworthy system according to Khalid. As a matter of fact, and as afore mentioned, Rihani believes that religion without spirituality is merely a corruptive dogma. Yet, when spirituality hovers upon religious principles and transcends them to all human actions, a person would start to acquire an understanding of life in which only the individual is to be sanctified and dignified. Therefore, a non-secular world would not regard the individual from a human perspective; rather, the latter would be categorized according to his or her religious affiliation-- if the law is applied on him or her in any certain circumstances--. In a non-secular country, religion is prioritized; the regular individual is probably in the third or fourth row after religious laws, wealth and materialist aspirations, and main officials. Indeed, the individual is coerced, oppressed, and only judged according to his religious duties. Actually, in such contexts, the law is not above all, it is rather above who engenders the anger of religious authorities for blasphemy or criticism of any religion. This is exemplified by Khalid's excommunication from the Maronite Church. Excommunicating him meant that he is no longer perceived as a Christian in his community or for the Church in general. From the Jesuits' perspective, he is no longer a human being to be worthy of respect. Thus, because the system is far from being characterized as secular, the value of being a human being is closely related to the religiosity of the person, and is only preserved if he or she clings to the rules forwarded to people by the Jesuits. The editor describes Khalid's exiled psychological state after the decision: "DISAPPOINTED, DISTRAUGHT, DISEASED, --- worsted by the Jesuits, excommunicated, crossed in love,-- but with an eternal glint of sunshine in his breast to open and light up new paths before him, Khalid, after the fatal episode, makes away from Baalbek. He suddenly disappears."<sup>131</sup> In this statement, Khalid's

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<sup>131</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911. P.171

exile clearly manifests in his psyche. He experiences a sense of shock because of the unexpected reaction of the church. Indeed, he did not visualize the fact that he will someday be humiliated and deprived of his right to be a Christian –as he was brought up in his family—only because his human side manifested itself through the act of love. Indeed, his beliefs in the hypocrisy of the church are reinforced for he probably might have asked the question: Is not Christianity synonymous with Love? As a matter of fact, the church members seemed to equate Christianity to a form of dictatorship in which human relations are objectified and only protected if they serve the Jesuits’ goals. With the unpredictable reality imposing itself on his life, Khalid also did not expect that the church would be easily granted the power to dispossess him of his ability to control his destiny and enact a choice he embraced. Yet, this event broadened his vision and established in his mind a revolutionary view about how religion should function in society and what should it instill in the spirit of the individual. Indeed, through this disgracing experience, Khalid begins to unravel what he maintains to be the problem: religion should no longer exert its power upon the community. It should simply not be representative of political control. Rather, religious authorities’ prerogatives should be limited to the spiritual realm away from asserting any political laws to control or interfere in people’s personal issues. Besides, religious authorities such as the Jesuits ought to distance themselves from Khalid’s criticism and his rebellion and overt attacks on their injustice and distorted manipulation of the Bible. For Khalid believes that each person is able to develop his or her own personal perspective concerning religion if he or she seeks to liberate one’s thought and meditate into the transgression of the Church. For example, Khalid did not hesitate to loudly denounce the financial corruption and the devious intentions of amassing money out of people with no apparent rights allowing the Jesuits to proceed as such. Indeed, the only immunity they have against being rebelled against is their use of God’s name. However, Khalid disobeys the “rules” and says to them after being asked to pay an amount of money as an appeal for the Church’s forgiveness and acceptance of his marriage to *Najma*:

And what is the use of binding, O Reverend Father, when a little sum of money can loosen anything you bind? It seems to me that these prohibitions of the Church are only made for the purpose of collecting alms. In other words, you bind for the sake of loosening, when good bait is on the hook, do you not? Pardon, O my Reverend Father, pardon. I can not, to save my soul and yours, reconcile these contradictions. For if Mother Church be certain that my marriage to



my cousin is contrary to the Law of God, is destructive of my spiritual well-being, then let her by all means prohibit it.<sup>132</sup>

Here, Khalid honestly and courageously untangles the root and the degree of corruption his local Church seems to be described with. Indeed, he does not hold that the Church has really a noble goal of defending and assuring Man's decency and self-respect. He rather accuses the superiors to be the ones who are readily willing to relinquish Man's greatness and grandeur as long as they gain money. Khalid believes these people to be traitors of their own faith because they are always expecting something in return. While, to Khalid, a "religious" man is supposed to incarnate spiritual values –if he is not already a fraudulent --, therefore, a spiritual person is by definition someone who gives, worships his heart out, and does not expect to be given or rewarded. He also outgrows all worldly materials because he strongly deems Man's heart and soul to be the most estimable elements in existence. Therefore, Khalid debunks the scandalous and corruptive aims of the Church as a result to his impossible marriage to his cousin *Najma* and suffers the consequences of being spiritually exiled from the Maronite community. Khalid's experience, in the Rihanian sense, is an example of the institutionalization of religion and thus, a proof of why a secular character of the state must prevail. At that time, --early 1910s--the Ottoman Empire was still in control which implies that such secular conscience –which is mainly a Western principle and a confirmation of the neutrality of the state --- was not a widespread belief unless among innovative young thinkers and philosophers such as Khalid for instance. Indeed, secularism would have never been able to be introduced into the community because Lebanon was merely a part of a weak and divided province influenced by the larger Ottoman system, which refers to Sunni Islam as the Empire's major religious paradigm. Besides, the notion of separating religion and the state was to be viewed as strange and as a manifestation of impiety and desecration. It would have never been perceived as a stream of thought aiming at people's liberation and independence, for these people themselves were blinded by the hegemony and massive authority religion – whether Islam or Christianity – inflicted upon them. Therefore, to provide a more accurate definition for secularism, George Kateb writes:

By secularism I mean nothing obscure. Let us say that it comprises the following elements: first, as much disentanglement of politics and religion ("church and state") as any given modern society wants or

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* p. 161.

allows; second, the reign of tolerance: the state permits (and sometimes encourages) the practice of all or nearly all religions, and lifts entirely the threat of persecution of religious minorities, whether by itself or by ill-disposed forces in society; the deliberate absence of explicitly religious considerations, concepts, and mandates from public political discourse together with the abandonment of religious tests for public offices; the general decline of religious influence in social life and in the lives of individuals; and the even more marked decline of religious influence in intellectual life.<sup>133</sup>

In his definition, Kateb confirms that in secular societies, religion should only be the source for the individual's personal view of his existence, and should not take part of any political machinations or laws whatsoever. Indeed, secularism is to be regarded as a solution to societies afflicted with the predominance of religious representatives in their daily lives, for it demarcates the limits between what should be perceived personal and spiritual, and what is political and objectively applicable to all citizens despite any religious group one belongs to. Indeed, "Emerson believed that creeds are "a disease of the intellect" [...] Faith, Emerson declares, depends neither on creeds nor on authority: "the faith that stands on authority is not faith." The more religion depends on authority, the more it loses."<sup>134</sup> Thus, according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, if religious thought is tinged with a background based on control similar to political conduct, it becomes devoid of its initial noble purpose which is to teach the individual and expand his or her vision and contact with Divinity. Also, "Thoreau rejects religion because it is, he thinks, only a habit and an impediment to the intellect [...] Religion can even be misused: some use the Bible to support the existence of slavery."<sup>135</sup> Here, it could be conceived how religion—if devoid from its original spiritual core—can be nefarious and likely to cause corruption and the maltreatments of any subject in the name of God. As a result:

Khalid refuses to accept religion as a habit. Before he goes to America, he stops attending church. When he returns from America, he still refuses to attend church [...] Khalid sees the church as misusing religion. It is always meddling in the affairs of others, causing problems, restricting freedom, not tolerating any opposition, and creating endless ways to get money from its members [...] Khalid thinks that religion has strayed from its spiritual

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<sup>133</sup> Kateb, George. "Locke and the Political Origins of Secularism". The New School. 2009. P.1002.

<sup>134</sup> Dunnavent III, Walter Edward. « Rihani, Emerson, and Thoreau » In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. P. 62. (Retrieved from Emerson's "Self-Reliance" p.117 and Emerson's "The Over-Soul" p 159.)

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

wellsprings[...]Islam, too, has lost its simplicity and must be freed “from its degrading customs, its stupefying traditions, its enslaving superstitions, its imbruting cants”.<sup>136</sup>

Thus, it is understood that Khalid denounces any religion that deviates from its righteous path of teaching human values and instilling strong faith in Divinity. Indeed, next to Christianity, he also criticizes Islam for it has become a source of political manipulation in the heart of the Ottoman Empire. For him “God is the only reality.”<sup>137</sup> In fact, political Islam has become a justification for the refusal of non-Muslims and was at the origins of what is referred to as *Al Jiziyah* tax, which is a tax imposed on Jewish and Christian subjects living under the Ottoman roof. Its main function is to contribute to the treasury of the higher state. Moreover, it is to be viewed as a form of persecution because those who refuse to pay such a tax were fiercely obliged to convert to Islam, leave the Empire, or maybe face death. From a Rihanian perspective, political Islam in the Ottoman Empire caused the *Seifo* Massacre, or what is called the Armenian Genocide in 1915. In this particular period, thousands of Armenians, Syrians, Chaldeans, and Aramaic-speaking populations were brutally murdered and tortured only because the Ottomans had to make of their Empire a “Christian-free” territory. Indeed, this was a type of ethnic “cleansing” and a demonstration of the Dictatorship of Ottoman leaders who were threatened and frightened by religious diversity and the growing number of Christian Levantines. Thus, such a massacre was mainly political and cultural. Definitely, the Empire used Islam as a tool to rationalize and justify its vicious behavior. This is why Rihani advocates, through Khalid, and through his own experience, Arab secularism. Both institutionalized Christianity and Islam has caused the protagonist’s psychological and identity-based exile. They have also been the reason for the killing and spiritual estrangement of many innocent people. Finally, they have wrecked the pure image of what faith should represent in people’s lives:

Rihani called for separating religion from the state. He sought to free politicians from the control of religious leaders to enable politics to serve national rather than sectarian interests. In *Extremism and Reform* Rihani warned, “If you do not forget your sects in order to truly unite for the sake of the nation, then thanks to these sects, you are all a prey to the ambition of foreigners [...] In fact, Rihani’s call for the separation of religion from the state is echoed today by many Lebanese politicians and intellectuals who, after seventeen years of civil war,

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<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* p.63.

<sup>137</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911. P. 209.

have come to realize that a secular government is the country's only chance to enjoy national unity[...]<sup>138</sup>

Thus, Khalid challenged the Jesuits for their embittering decisions and inhumane intentions towards his desire to marry *Najma*. Indeed, they randomly meddled within his personal life and forwarded Christianity as their pretext to gain easy money. These actions exemplify Rihani's criticism towards political religion and justify Khalid's retreat and search for a purer form of belief. Indeed, Khalid sought God as a whole and did not seek any particular affiliation or representation of Divinity. Khalid wanted to find God wherever he went and whenever he traveled. Thus, his vision of a Divine entity grew to encompass space as nature and psyche as in human beings.

## B) Khalid: A Lebanese Transcendentalist.

Throughout his wonderings in Mount-Lebanon as a hermit-like figure, Khalid started discovering a new power diffused by Nature. Indeed, he writes to it a letter in which he acknowledges its divinity and the lively spirit that it diffuses around it:

I come to thee, I prostrate my face before thee, I surrender myself wholly to thee. O touch me with thy wand divine again; stir me once more in thy mysterious alembics; remake me to suit the majestic silence of thy hills, the supernatural purity of thy sky [...] take me in thine arms, and whisper to me of thy secrets; fill my senses with thy breath divine [...] infusing in me of thy ruggedness and strength, thy power and grandeur.<sup>139</sup>

Pioneers of Transcendentalist thought, such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman held that nature is to be venerated for it is sacred and full of spiritual meaning that only a banished person from the material creeds of the civilized world would comprehend. Thoreau was one of the figures widely known to live as recluse in Walden Pond as an expression of his bond with nature. He writes: "Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house..."<sup>140</sup> Through intuition, the human being can identify with nature as a source of knowledge and inspiration. This identification traces its roots to a pantheist view asserting that Man is part of nature.

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<sup>138</sup> Diab, Nuwar Mawlawi. "Ameen Rihani's Vision of Globalization: Matrimony, Not Hegemony" In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. p.93.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid* .p.95.96.

<sup>140</sup> Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. Boston. 1897. P.66. (originally published in 1854)

Besides, transcendentalists believed that humans are part of nature and equal to its entire constituents. For example, Emerson writes: “Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort all her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers [...] reflected all the wisdom of his best hour.”<sup>141</sup> In his recluse, Khalid is reminiscent of transcendentalist thinkers, and especially of Henry David Thoreau’s experience in the outskirts of the city and civilization, specifically in the Walden Pond. The latter writes in *Walden* : “This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense [...] I go and come with a strange liberty in nature, a part of herself [...] all the elements are unusually congenial to me.”<sup>142</sup>

The protagonist’s journey as a hermit in the mountains allowed him to be in contact with nature, therefore, the latter became able to identify himself as source of revelation which he acquires directly from natural scenery, contrarily to what sacred books and widely-recognized religious tenets and rules recount about the chosen prophets. Indeed, it started to provide a flow of unwritten wisdom that pours itself directly into Khalid’s meditative mind and spirit. Here, his exile is manifested through his utter loneliness and solitude that he needed in order to conceive the secrets of nature as an inspiring milieu. Moreover, Khalid becomes more in a state of limbo for he no longer adheres to his original religious doctrine: Maronite Christianity. Indeed, he is now more different after he willingly loses and rejects the orthodox worldview. He also appears to be an unconventional prophet-like figure, as he becomes a mystic who wanders in the constant search for a reality to believe in and a reality he deems a source for inner-prosperity and self-appreciation.

## **1. American Transcendentalist Philosophy as an Influence on Khalid the Baalbekian.**

In the *Book of Khalid*, transcendentalist thought seems to inhabit Khalid’s road to trying to find Truth, where he constantly and eventually grapples with an exiled mind and psyche. Khalid, after his excommunication, enters a new phase of exile, where he devotes his presence, philosophical convictions, body, and soul into the spiritual service and worship of nature. Indeed, Khalid retreats into Mount Lebanon in order to develop a new understanding for nature as an element from the universe inextricably linked to the human perception of

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<sup>141</sup> Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature*. , James Munroe and Co. Boston, 1836. p.10.

<sup>142</sup> Thoreau, Henry David., *Walden*. Penguin Random House, United Kingdom, 2016.p.121.

what is truly Divine and how it functions in relation to his personal experience with the Jesuits, to venture to acquire an explanation for the relationship between nature and the human being, and to develop an innovative religious worldview, which is non-traditional for his community, and disparate in contrast to certain orthodox creeds introduced to the Lebanese by its spokespersons. Transcendentalist thought is mainly inspired by Romanticism, which emerged as a reaction to an excessive rationalized view of the world introduced in the Age of Enlightenment. Indeed, the romantics sought to alleviate nature from the extremely scientific perception it acquired and that was buried in it. This view objectified reality and rendered it a mere tool for experimentation and materialist exploitation. Thus, Transcendentalism, as an offshoot of Romanticism, strove to shift this view into an angle where nature becomes not a space for human corruption; rather, it is transformed into a fountain for intuition, veneration, and meditation. Transcendentalism, therefore, is the road taken by its adherents to perceive nature as a space emitting spirituality, mutual affinity, and liveliness through its constituents. After his rejection by the Jesuits, Khalid finds himself driven into the natural realm of Lebanon, a place where he heals from his respiratory problems—specifically his asthma—, and a space for him to discover that to have faith and believe in a Divine entity is not only limited to Christianity or Islam or any other established system of religious thought. This feeling can also be transmitted into the human soul by trusting one's intuition and regarding Mother Nature as a manifestation for the existence of a Divinity enshrouded in all of its ingredients and its phenomena. In the book, Khalid's decision to run away from the rumblings and roars of the severe religious laws and their harsh, imprisoning rules highly resembles the will of the Transcendentalist figure's escapist attitude of being alone with nature, and temporarily abandoning "civilization" in order to find a way for self-rediscovery and personal spiritual renovation and revolution. In his hiding place, Khalid pours out wisdom and starts to rehabilitate his reflection upon his situation. Indeed, he is the exile figure of home, of love, and of religion. In such circumstances, Khalid—although at times impulsive in his reactions and eccentric in his attitude—begins to grasp the aura of a philosopher who strives to overcome his brief intellectual impasse, and thrives into a dimension that supersedes tradition and the daily religious clichés he encountered from his childhood till the day he was refused to be *Najma's* husband. The protagonist, in his attempt to achieve a spiritual answer to his psychological crisis, resulted by his inability to completely challenge the Jesuits' corruption, finds nature as an area where he can be protected and his spirit guarded by an unknown—yet ubiquitous—force of the metaphysical side of the mind's perceptions. The Editor describes Khalid's chosen land:

Although we claim some knowledge of the Lebanon mountains, having landed there in our journey earthward, and having since then, our limbs waxing firm and strong, made many a journey through them, we could not, after developing, through many readings, Khalid's spiritual films, identify them with the vicinage which he made his Kaaba. On what hill, in what wadi, under what pines did he ruminare and extravagate, we could not from these idealised pictures ascertain. For a spiritual film is other than a photographic one. A poet's lens is endowed with a seeing eye, an insight, and a faculty to choose and compose. Hence the difficulty in tracing the footsteps of Fancy—in locating its cave, its nest, or its Kaaba.<sup>143</sup>

In this assertion, the Editor describes the Lebanese natural scenery as Khalid the poet's new haven. It is not simply considered as a place chosen by the persecuted Khalid to hide in physically. Rather, the editor explains that it is converted into an altar of worship. His journey is also perceived as transcending the worldly and earthly vision of everything material. Rather, it appears as a pilgrimage in which Khalid—in a perpetual will—circumvents nature in search for the spiritual core it contains; a core only attained through an insight developed by the authentic believer in its interactional power. The Editor assimilates Khalid's location to the *Kaaba*. In fact, the latter is defined as the building located in the center of the Islamic religion's most sacred of mosques, *Al Masjid Al Haram*, specifically, in Mecca (Present day Saudi Arabia). It is the black cube-shaped construction by which, during *Al Hajj* period (Islamic pilgrimage), Muslims from all sects and places come from around the world to participate in a purifying visit around that building which they believe to be the resting place where the prophet Mohammed is buried. They take part of a long trip and walk around its outskirts in a continuous round motion while—at the same time—uttering these words: *Labbaik'a Allahom'a Labbaik* which is almost the equivalent to: Praise the Lord! Thus, nature, in this context, appears to be Khalid's Kaaba for it provides him spiritual purification and represents sacredness. Moreover, this view of nature is an embodiment of transcendentalist thought, and it applies to Khalid's situation for he is a wanderer clad in solitude, which is a symptom of exile. In *Nature*, by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the writer describes the affinity between Man and Nature, and explains how it whispers an infinite stream of wisdom to him:

TO go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society [...] but if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds will separate between him and what he touches [...] if the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come

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<sup>143</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911.p. 181.

out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile. The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood.<sup>144</sup>

Emerson also refers to stars as an example. Mentioning this element is a reminder of Khalid and *Najma*. Indeed, *Najma* is the Arabic term for Star. As a matter of fact, she represents the direct reason for his sudden retreat and escape to nature. Yet, she always seems to follow his path, incarnated in a natural element that Khalid would consider a source for hope and eternal gleams of light. *Najma*'s spirit helps Khalid through his transcendentalist journey. Indeed, he probably links the eternal shining of stars—that are reminders of his beloved *Najma*-- he encounters to the sacred and impossible love that he will never --although reciprocated-- obtain. Besides, Emerson insists upon the mysterious and enigmatic outlook nature emits to the person who experiments with it. Indeed, it is a quality that drove Khalid to remain a year as a hermit-like figure in order to finally have the needed time to get hold of nature's secrets, which means that Khalid learned to inspect natural elements by seeing what is beyond their state as mere objects of scientific analysis. Although Khalid chose nature to be his corner for the rediscovery of the sacred, he despised the hermits who lived there for a very long time. According to the Editor, the hermit says "The clock in him was not wound right—he was always ahead or behind time, always complaining that we monks did not reckon time as he did."<sup>145</sup> Here, Khalid seems to lose track of time while wandering in nature. Being unable to divide time in a traditional sense---as past, present, and future—is not regarded as a sign of loss or any type of mental affliction. Rather, the act of total immersion in nature's vivid elements—which are venerated almost in animistic fashion-- leads Khalid to espouse time in the same manner nature is subjected to it. Indeed, for Khalid, nature is eternal and it never fades, which is an asset regarded by the hero as a sign for nature's sacredness. Time for Khalid shifts to a dissection related to the state of the soul before life, during life, and beyond existence. Khalid omits the possibility of death through his perception of time such as the transcendentalists, and believes himself to be the ever-regenerating fetus of his mother nature --who is perpetually reincarnated into a new form--:

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<sup>144</sup> Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature*. James Monroe and Company. 1849. p. 8.

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm#1>)

<sup>145</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p. 187.



O Mother eternal, divine, satanic, all encompassing[...]O star-diademed, pearl-sandaled Goddess, I am thine forever and ever: whether as a child of thy womb, or an embodiment of a spirit-wave of thy light, or a dumb blind personification of thy smiles and tears[...] I am thine forever and ever[ ...] I surrender myself wholly to thee[...]remake me to suit the majestic silence of thy hills,[...]the mystic austerity of thy groves[...]the imperious pride of thy pines[...]take me in thine arms, and whisper to me of thy secrets; fill my senses with thy breath divine[...]-- whether I become a star-gem in thy cestus or a sun in thy diadem[...]I am content. For I am certain that it shall be for the best.—KHALID.<sup>146</sup>

Here, Khalid confirms that he wishes to be metamorphosed into a silent, yet powerful element from nature bearing sanctity and regeneration within its soul. Khalid does not hesitate, thus, to address nature as an idealist who seeks to abandon his human nature for the sake of merging with stars, groves, or pines. He is an idealist because he seeks to transform the human notion of space-time into a cycle that always enacts rebirth and lives in eternity, contrarily to the hermits who maintain that the human body is an eventual subject for decay. Emerson explains this view of space-time:

The relations of parts and the end of the whole remaining the same, what is the difference, whether land and sea interact, and worlds revolve and intermingle without number or end,—deep yawning under deep, and galaxy balancing galaxy, throughout absolute space,—or, whether, without relations of time and space, the same appearances are inscribed in the constant faith of man? Whether nature enjoy a substantial existence without, or is only in the apocalypse of the mind, it is alike useful and alike venerable to me. Be it what it may, it is ideal to me.<sup>147</sup>

Basically, Emerson's idea revolves around the fact that he does not notice any difference in elements of nature that are in constant interaction in comparison to what is perceived by a transcendentalist. Indeed, the latter would feel that this constant synergy is the epitome of the heart of his faith. The idealist transcendentalist does not give much importance to the relations of time and space as much as he cares for a cooperation between elements of nature that prove the eternity of the regenerative capacity of this nature. This capacity is what constantly feeds his faith and belief into the divine soul that occupies it. Thus, "Objects in nature have a connection with spiritual laws. Discovering this connection increases knowledge."<sup>148</sup> This

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.* p.95-96.

<sup>147</sup> Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature*. . James Monroe and Company. 1849 .p.45.

(<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/29433/29433-h/29433-h.htm#6>)

<sup>148</sup> Dunnavent III, Walter Edward. « Rihani, Emerson, and Thoreau » In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. P.63.

knowledge Khalid gains is deeply invigorated by his intuition; the intuition that allows him to closely fathom the divinity of nature and its ability to connect to him. Khalid had already developed blind trust in his intuitive faculties, as the editor recounts: “And in certain moments he had more faith in his instincts than in his reason. “Our instincts,” says he, “never lie. They are honest [...]”<sup>149</sup> This development was the result of Khalid attending lectures on Atheism, yet his intuition continued to convince him otherwise. Indeed, it contradicted to what he learned in these lessons, and chose to follow what his spiritual half would dictate upon him.

Thus, like Thoreau, Khalid left for Mount Lebanon as the former retreated to Walden. Besides, in his brief exclusion in the woods, Khalid is also a reminder of Saint Maron: the founder of the Maronite faith, and the role model for all Maronites known to gather his healing properties, constant prayer and from his belief in the ability to communicate with god through nature. In his brief, adventure, Khalid learned that nature is a communicative entity, and through transcending the material creeds of established religion, one can find divinity elsewhere. Indeed, Khalid’s mind, soul, and instinct surpassed his family and community’s traditional beliefs, and challenged their authority. For he was certain that the corrupt Jesuits had to be replaced and his thought should have not been focused on their orders. As a matter of fact, he and Najma lost the opportunity of their lives because of these Jesuitical principles. Therefore, he sought the stars in nature, and idealistically believed in the ability of natural elements to transcend time and space, and translate divine power that could lift him into a more peaceful and incorrupt place, where he can be the prophet who inspires his community and purify their thoughts.

## **2. Khalid: A Prophet-like Figure:**

The *Book of Khalid* is first introduced to the readers as a lost manuscript found in the Khedivial Library of Cairo among other lost sacred books. The way Khalid’s story is put forth to the reader is a reminder of the form of any other valuable book that generally pertains to important figures such as prophets and royalty for example. Indeed, this library—built by the Khedive Ismail-- is known to be the largest in Cairo and the holder of many ancient varied copies of the Qur’an for example. It is also the place where books about and from medieval Egypt, along with other authentic manuscripts of Egyptian Islamic cultural life of the past times are collected in its archives. The position of the Book—intentionally chosen by Rihani—is a

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<sup>149</sup> Rihani, *the Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p. 67-68.

sign that Khalid is not a regular type of man or scholar to be familiarized with through his *bildungsroman* life story of a Lebanese-American. Rather, Rihani's choice seems to foreshadow that the protagonist is a Man who – through his journeys in both East and West— was able to demonstrate wisdom, intelligence, and strife in order to finally bring such a masterpiece to life, and enlighten the reader about the reform he sought for his deluded community. Moreover, after the editing process, it is noticed that the first opening chapter of the book is entitled *Al Fatihah*. The latter is derived from the first opening Surah from the Islamic book of scripture. It is the equivalent in Arabic for “Opening Chapter”, and is divided into verses, or *Aya'at*. The word *Al Fatihah* in Arabic is generally connotative of the Quranic discourse more than any other literary production or more than any other written book. Thus, the way the chapter is introduced to the reader gives the impression that he or she is about to read scripture rather than an immigrant novel:

IN THE KHEDIVIAL LIBRARY OF CAIRO, AMONG the Papyri of the Scribe of Amen-Ra and the beautifully illuminated copies of the Koran, the modern Arabic Manuscript which forms the subject of this book, was found. The present Editor was attracted to it by the dedication and the rough drawings on the cover; which, indeed, are as curious, if not as mystical, as ancient Egyptian symbols. One of these is supposed to represent a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a Pyramid, the other is a dancing group under which is written: “The stockbrokers and the Dervishes”. And around these symbols, in Arabic circlewise, these words:--“*And this is my Book, the Book of Khalid, which I dedicate to my Brother Man, my Mother Nature, and my Maker God.*”<sup>150</sup>

Khalid's opening and graphic drawings imply that this is a book that was created as a uniting force for both people from the United States, represented by the stereotypical stockbrokers, and the Lebanese exemplified by the Sufi dancers, to examine as a testimony for union—taking already Khalid's experience into consideration--. It is, indeed, perceived as combinative of both the cultures that construct Khalid's identity. Moreover, the dedication seems exceptionally remarkable because it alludes to the fact that this is a messenger sent from God to the people. In fact, it seems as if—by means of a revelation—Khalid sought that this book would be devoted to humanity, for it will suit all people for eternity despite their differences and their opposite backgrounds. Besides, his story is presented as a gift for nature which he believes provided him with the ability to discern the metaphysical meaning beyond what is material. Indeed, through nature, Khalid comprehended the need for a spiritual revolution from within in order to embody social change in the Lebanese or the American communities. Khalid meant to invent a therapy

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<sup>150</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p. 3.

of the soul through his journey as a way to whether reduce corruption in American democracy or inspire religious independence and reform in his native country. Generally, spiritual revolutions are characteristic of prophets. For instance, Jesus Christ came as humanity's deliverer from sins through tolerance and forbearing, while prophet Mohamed complemented these values as one of humanity's callers for union through the belief in a God who would encourage honesty and individualism. When Khalid found the opportunity to speak at the Omayyad Mosque in Damascus, he established himself as almost "our new Muhdi"<sup>151</sup> or "the true leader, the real emancipator, -- "who has in him the soul of the East and the mind of the West, the builder of a great Asiatic Empire".<sup>152</sup> Indeed, he is the prophet of the "modern" world. Khalid explains:

'There is no Revolution without a Reformation', says a German philosopher. And truly so. For the fetters which bind us can not be shaken off, before the conscience is emancipated. A political revolution must always be preceded by a spiritual one, that it might have some enduring effect. Otherwise, things will revert to their previous state of rottenness as sure as Allah lives. But mind you, I do not say, Cut down the hedges; mow the thistle fields; uproot the obscene plants; no: I only ask you to go through them, and out of them, to return no more. Sell your little estate there, if you have one; sell it at any price: give it away and let the dead bury their dead. Cease to work in those thorny fields, and God and nature will do the rest.<sup>153</sup>

Here, Khalid consolidates his view on spirituality by taking the position of a prophet who addresses his foresight, wise judgment, and prophetic epiphany on the virtues of spirituality to whether a Syrian or an American. He refers to the bad seeds of corruption in both countries— institutionalized religion and rotten democracy—and encourages the listeners to uproot them. He utilizes his own experience with nature to deliver his epiphany to the world, and which he believes would be a continuum to all other prophetic discourses. Incarnating a prophet-like figure by establishing the image of the one-against-all is quite revelatory for the theme of exile. Because he deems himself to be the chosen one, --by nature, by his intellectual experience, and by his hybridity— Khalid highly interconnects with prophethood. Rihani, while constructing the form in *the Book of Khalid*, was extremely inspired by Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor Untailored). Indeed, the narrator in Carlyle's book "edits a German manuscript that has the potential to infuse British pragmatism with German

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<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* p.273.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p.274.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.* p.264.

idealism”<sup>154</sup> which is quite reminiscent of Khalid’s attempt for the fusion between “Eastern spirituality” and “Western materialism”. These are characteristics of an idealist who leans towards embodying the figure of a prophet. Besides, the editor in *The Book of Khalid* seems to be created by Rihani as a mediator between the reader and Khalid’s mindset. Indeed, according to Layla Al Maleh, “Rihani adopts several of Carlyle’s narrative devices, chief of which is speaking through a fictional editor. At face value, the editor device or “guise” is employed to maintain an artistic distance between writer and reader.”<sup>155</sup> Indeed, it seems that the editor –by creating this distance—is alluding to the degree of Khalid’s intellectual exile and that his ideological path is quite exceptional and a bit distant to be digested by readers at first. The editor, too, seems to imply ironic distance, especially with the satirical metacommentary Rihani allocates to him in recounting Khalid’s story. The editor’s function is to show that Khalid’s thoughts could not be deciphered unless the reader explores his journey and is informed by an editor to explain it. This reinforces the disparity in worldview between Khalid and those who surround him, which further illustrates his image as a prophet who stands against conformity. Also, an analogy can be established between Khalid and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In fact, the latter was a Persian prophet who believed in the concept of the “Overman”. The term “Overman” is attributed to someone who is able to go beyond other people’s wills and overcome himself to obey only the laws and the principles he creates. Indeed, Khalid has worked on becoming the man who transcends the one-sided vision of identity, and has adopted a “will to power” in order to speak in front of the *ulema* (Arabic for religious exegetes) and present his reformist ideas about Islam such as secularism, and that Islam should be a matter of the soul rather than a political system. Khalid has achieved a degree of self-mastery because of his excommunication, his imprisonment, and his rejection by both the “East” and the “West”. His prowess and proficiency allowed him to be unique by combining values and by complementing two identities that rejected him. Besides, Zarathustra experienced self-exile – that could be assimilated to Khalid’s immigration to the United States—and both of them came back to embody the intellectual growth resulting from their voyages. Moreover, Rihani created Khalid through Carlyle’s vision of his protagonist in *Sartor Resartus*, Teufelsdröckh. Indeed, according to Layla al

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<sup>154</sup> Hassan, Wail “Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani”. In Fine, Todd (Ed), *the Book of Khalid, A Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press. 2016. P.388.

<sup>155</sup> Al Maleh, Layla. “The Literary Parentage of the Book of Khalid, a Genealogical Study”. In Fine, Todd (Ed), *the Book of Khalid, a Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press. 2016. P. 332.

Maleh “Teufelsdröckh may have departed [...] to witness the birth of a new society [...]Khalid, too, disappears suddenly, and his scribe, Shakib, gives the final “conjecture” regarding his new “spiritual” abode.”<sup>156</sup> Khalid’s disappearance is regarded as a sort of a “tragic” ending to his fate. Indeed, it does not provide a satisfying closure for those who believed in Khalid, as if his disappearance was also to be regarded an opening for another chapter for Khalid’s life elsewhere. Like in Zarathustra’s mind, this event can be linked to the notion of Eternal Recurrence. As a prophet-like figure, Khalid expects his memory to be revived, and his spirit always existing and hovering among the peoples and the nations he lived in. Eternal Recurrence is a Nietzschean concept that illustrates the eternal and repetitive motion of events and people in the past, present, and future. It means that if Khalid has disappeared at some point in time, he will come back someday with the same philosophy he adopted, in the future or in another past time. This strengthens the idea that Khalid will always be immortal –it is important to mention that *Khalid* is a word in Arabic equivalent for “*the immortal*”-- such as the prophets. Finally, the hero’s disappearance can also be explained from a less optimistic point of view. Actually, this ending can be a sign of Khalid’s nihilistic conviction that everything is meaningless, and that sending his body and soul to travel aimlessly in a barren desert is the solution for his salvation from the irremediable vices of both the East and the West. It does not incarnate much how a prophet would react. However, it could be an attempt by Rihani to create a parody of his “prophethood” in order to insist that being an idealist and a perfectionist might –at times—lead to the person’s impossible peace of mind. Indeed, in the Editor’s words: “Ask us not, O gentle Reader, what become of him. How can *we* know? He might have entered a higher spiritual circle or a lower; of a truth, he is not now on the outskirts of the desert: deeper to this side or to that he must have passed. And passing he continues to dream of “appearance in the disappearance; of truth in the surrender; of sunrises in the sunset”.<sup>157</sup>

Thus, Khalid is assimilated to a “Messiah” or to a “Muhdi” –the latter is the twelfth imam in whom the Shiite Muslims believe he disappeared and will eventually come back one day in the present time to deliver earth from its atrocities and fill it with justice, integrity, and peace.-. Rihani introduced his protagonist as a man who was fraught of an experience that would qualify him to think and see beyond time and beyond the dominant traditional thinking of his community. Therefore, he was depicted as a prophet-like character whose mind and soul are

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.315.

inscribed in the spiritual as his weapon against persecution, and as an emphasis on his solitude by which he challenges everybody.

### 3. Pantheism and the Transmigration of Souls.

Pantheism, as a worldview, lies in the belief that the universe, the human being, and the Divine are equal. Pantheists do not establish a hierarchy between elements in nature. Rather, they believe that all of them are equal and that all of these elements are worthy of worship and respect. Pantheism is also the view that the human being is part of nature, and that he is an element that contains a soul exactly like any other particle. This creed is characteristic of transcendentalists, and Khalid fits perfectly into this animistic perception of the world. Such a belief comes to be formulated by the protagonist when he chooses to leave his home and depart for an errand in Mount Lebanon. This errand drastically shifts his religious faith and revolutionizes his common knowledge on Christianity; especially that it has already proved itself to be represented by priests who cannot care less about the importance and the sanctity of individuals. Being enriched by the divine power of nature, and coming to realize that humans can become a part of it, and that the spirit of God might be found in its nearest atoms as well as its farthest of planets, resulted in his conversion to this religious view, that according to him, does not belittle the soul of a human being. To define pantheism in a more specific manner, Tiffany K Wayne writes:

Pantheism is the worldview that sees God and Nature as the same and, since some Transcendentalists, in particular Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David THOREAU, seemed to “worship” nature as a God or at least emphasized that nature was divine, Transcendentalism was characterized by some as a pantheistic spirituality [...] Pantheism differs from and is seen as antithetical to orthodox Christianity, in one sense then, because it challenges biblical morality, since in pantheism there is no moral obligation to God but only to oneself and to the abstract goal of seeking to perfect oneself. In addition, biblical Christianity teaches that God is not only separate from but creator of and therefore above nature.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, Khalid espouses such a view and maintains that God’s soul hovers in *kulmakan* (the Arabic word for everywhere). The purpose for being a pantheist is not simply a frivolous and ephemeral desire to view the world from a different angle. It is an attempt by Khalid to emphasize the political dependence his community witnesses under the Ottoman rule. As a matter of fact, believing in the utter equality of all of life’s ingredients, and holding that the

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<sup>158</sup> Wayne, Tiffany K. *Encyclopedia of Transcendentalism*. InfoBase Publishing. 2006. P. 208.

material can also be impregnated with a spirit alive inside of it, and that God is not above all nor is a threatening creature waiting for revenge or punishment, but rather a vital force that reacts to establish harmony and equilibrium in life, means that this oppressed society should understand that a government has no right to impose neither strict and inhumane rules nor tyrannical orders in the name of religion. And because nature is free, and Man is a constituent of it, this implies that Man is consequently a free component and there is no justification for the maltreatment of the people neither for restricting their liberty. Indeed, a pantheistic point of view is not only a matter of hiding under the guise of some metaphysical refuge to ease a broken, agitated soul. Rather, it is an idea about existence that serves the political and social life of a crucified society under institutionalized and distorted religion. For instance, Khalid, at some point in his life, addresses the God he seeks and fully expresses his intentions in regards to life, to the East, and to the West:

In the religious systems of mankind, I sought thee, O God, in vain; in their machine-made dogmas and theologies, I sought thee in vain; in their churches and temples and mosques, I sought thee long, and long in vain; [...] the various dissonances in thy name shall be reduced, for the sake of the infant races of the Earth, to perfect harmony.—KHALID.<sup>159</sup>

The protagonist insists that God should not remain captivated in the materialist calculations of some theological system; rather, it must encompass all creeds and transcend the conflicting details that differ from a religion to another. Indeed, the world could never reach a state of balance unless all people are united under the perception that God is for all and will serve all as long as humans absorb the understanding that no one is endorsed with divine blessing on the detriment of another person. Thus, for Khalid, pantheism is in the service of the political sphere in his community. He explains: “For a life sincerely spent between the Temple and the Vineyard, between devotion and honest labour, producing to one man of all mankind some positive good, is not to be compared with the life which oscillates continuously between egoism and vanity, quackery and cowardice [...]”<sup>160</sup>. Indeed, he believes that worshipping the temple of nature can generate honesty and a genuine work ethic that could save the community from collapsing into the gap of governmental treachery. Moreover, by moving from a bustling territory where religious corruption feeds on the people’s freedoms and conscience, to a natural space that survives under calmness and purity is considered to be the breaking of a territorial law, which is also psychological and mental for Khalid. Its purpose is to create the energy

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<sup>159</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p. 201-202.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* p. 197.



necessary to complement and foster reform. Khalid, like Thoreau, takes a pantheist stance as a reaction to emphasize the materialist and corruptive mentality of a “civilized” type of space: “While he was living at Walden Pond, Thoreau was arrested for not paying his poll tax [...] It is moral to break a law, Thoreau concludes, [...] if a government becomes unjust or oppressive, everyone should resist it, peacefully at first but with force if necessary.”<sup>161</sup> Thus, pantheism is continuity to the transcendentalist echoes of Khalid’s experience in the bosom of nature. He does not adopt it for its own sake. Rather, he concludes that the material has a spiritual core—in nature – and applies his theory to society in order to awaken true religion and deliver people from the manacles of its politicization. In *the Book of Khalid*, Lebanese writer Khalil Gibran, who is a long-time friend of Rihani’s, participates in the artistic completion of the book, and leaves his imprints in various parts of its pages. In fact, Gibran was a well-known artist, mainly influenced by Symbolism. This movement was basically based on the illustration of the spiritual and giving it a certain visual form. Gibran’s art is a reaction and an antidote to materialism and corruption. It generally depicts human figures—not necessarily drawn in a specific order—and random lines that float together in the air or the Cosmos. For example, this picture is introduced to the reader accompanied by Khalid’s message in which he yearns for a True God in Nature that would be the deliverance of humanity from its materialist vices:



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<sup>161</sup> Dunnavent III, Walter Edward. « Rihani, Emerson, and Thoreau » In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004. P.61.

<sup>162</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.96.

At first glance, this picture appears to be an engraving in which only colors in black and white dominate. This lack of variety in coloring and glow seems to be significant of the Manichean view people have about the world and nature. Indeed, the color white indicates the spiritual while the black parts are signs of the material. Contrarily to Khalid, others do not mingle the soul and the object, and they lack an insight concerning the reception of nature or the globe as a lively and conscious entity. Indeed, human figures in this engraving appear to roam aimlessly in nature without comprehending how to establish a fruitful mixture between what is material and what is spiritual. People here are drawn in white as a way to highlight that they believe themselves to be the only creatures who are in possession of a soul, while nature is a variety of mere objects. However, in the forefront, two human figures seem to be in a harmonious connection with nature depicted by the form of a planet. They are the sole ones to try to delve into nature and establish this marriage between black and white. However, other figures in the back are depicted as groups of people following an incomprehensible and endless trail. These probably symbolize society as a whole, and bespeak the prevailing conformity in thought that leads to stagnation. They seem to be the lost people who are manipulated by religion and the government. They are condensed together in the picture to highlight the notion of the “herd” that follows orders and applies them regardless of their consequences and without any previous reflection. Thus, the engraving seems to translate the incapability of the majority to absorb a pantheist vision of the Cosmos, while the minority—who is non-conformist and rebellious—finds its way towards envisioning the real essence of nature as an amalgamation of the spiritual and the material. Besides, exile manifests itself in both ways and follows both directions. Society is indeed exiled vis a vis prosperity and liberation because it cannot decode the solution for its independence and development, while the reformers—such as Khalid—are living in such an intellectual state because they espouse a prophetic and a wider vision of nature through which they perceive themselves to be fundamental actors and interpreters of its mysteries. Therefore, there is great inadequacy in comparing and connecting both visions, which necessarily leads to the exclusion of both and them clashing. Basically, the image is divided between those who blindly commit to a viewpoint stressing the disparity between spirit and object, whereas the others open-mindedly melt into the regenerative cycle of the nature that never withers. Alice Raphael explains the theme Gibran leans to illustrate: “Gibran is dealing with the fundamentals...He senses the meaning of the earth and her productions; of man, [...] and throughout his work he expresses the interrelating unity of man with

nature...”<sup>163</sup> Pantheism is a belief espoused by Khalid/ Rihani, Gibran, and other members of the *Al Mahjar Group*. Following such a worldview, the doctrine of the transmigration of souls or metempsychosis appears to be intricately in direct relationship with pantheism especially that Khalid endorses his possible future as a “stargem in [thy] cestus or a sun in [thy] diadem or even a firefly in [thy] fane...” when addressing his message to Mother Nature. Indeed, pantheists admit that life and death are equal in nature, and that everything is a manifestation of a divinity that is not separate in itself. This idea confirms that death does not lead to an ending, rather, in it, the body dissolves in order to serve the soil’s right for rebirth and fertility, while the soul migrates to inhabit a flower, a star, a planet, or another human being. Rihani confirms that “every reality is in itself an undying source of mysterious growth and decay.”<sup>164</sup> While Mikhail Naimy holds that:

If growth be the child of decay, and decay be the child of growth;  
If life be the mother of death, and death be the mother of life, then verily were they but one at every point of time and Space... The wheel of Time revolves in the voids of Space. Upon its rim are all the things perceivable by the senses which are unable to perceive a thing except in Time and Space. So Things continue to appear and disappear. What disappears. What disappears for one at a certain point of Time and Space appears to another at another point.<sup>165</sup>

This means that Khalid, during his spiritual journey in the heart of nature, has developed a correspondence with nature which led him to discard the idea of an afterlife and believe in the eternal revitalization of existence, which drastically contradicts the Christian and Islamic doctrines. Therefore, Khalid’s self-enforced physical exile resulted in an exile in belief and in the espousal of a contradictory reflective position in contrast to his Lebanese compatriots. Khalid, with his ardent faithfulness to his new religious assumptions, finds himself in a state of a perennial struggle with Christians and Muslims; especially that he also exhibits humanist tendencies

### C) A Humanist Khalid: His Worship and Homage For Man.

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<sup>163</sup> Raphael, Alice. “On the Art of Khalil Gibran”, in Bushrui, Suheil, and Munro, John (Eds). *Khalil Gibran: Essays and Introductions*. Rihani House. 1970. P.133, 135-136.

<sup>164</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Path of Vision*. James T White and Co.p.23.

<sup>165</sup> Naimy, Mikhail. *The Book of Mirdad*. Clear Press Association with Element Books, 1962.p.92.

In his manuscript, Khalid starts telling his story by sending a letter to Man. In his letter, the protagonist shows his confidence in Man's potential and his hope in his ability to spread knowledge and be a bridging gap between the East and the West. Rihani, in Khalid's words, writes: "No matter how good thou art, O my brother, or how bad thou art, no matter how high or how low in the scale of being thou art, I still would believe in thee, and have faith in thee, and love thee."<sup>166</sup> This fervent belief in Man as an entity that is not judged by its religious belonging or its private opinion mirrors the author's nationalist, humanist perception about human beings. Indeed, Rihani created a humanist protagonist for the latter belongs to a Christian minority of the Arab World. According to Rihani, in order to survive in a multicultural Arab World, with only one language in common, one should not be enclosed in one's religious shell or be confined to one's sect. Rather, the Arab in general, and the Arab-American specifically, should highlight his humanistic tendencies as the common denominator between Arabs and humans. Therefore, Khalid as both a Maronite and a holder of a double identity seeks to create a third one, which is to be a humanistic Arab American nationalist, and venture gradually to overcome his sense of exile. For instance, Hajjar explains: "It is this kind of identity, which Rihani insisted on embracing to counter his feeling of insecurity as a Christian Lebanese in the heart of the Arab world, and to avoid the loss of distinctiveness as an Arab citizen of the world. It is thus important from the onset to emphasize that Rihani's loyalty to the smaller circle, born of love to his country of birth, Lebanon, in no way contradicted his loyalty to the greater Arab homeland, and his dedication to serve his people as he served the cause of humankind."<sup>167</sup> Rihani and Khalid resemble each other. Indeed, Khalid's humanistic approach is close in goals and vision to that of the author. They both sought to focus on Man as they wanted the Lebanese, and Arab community in general, to outgrow the insignificant religious distinctions and draw attention to humanity first. Such secular ideas aggravated Khalid's internal exile for they prioritized humans rather than religious categorization of people.

## **1. Renaissance Humanism and Man as the Measure of all Things.**

During the Renaissance Period in Italy and England, Humanism emerged as a cultural response in order to revitalize the accomplishments of classical antiquity. Indeed, being a

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<sup>166</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*, Dodd, Mead, and Co .p.9.

<sup>167</sup> Hajjar, Nijmeh. « Ameen Rihani's Humanist Vision of Arab Nationalism ». *Ameen Rihani Bridging East and West: A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, & Oxford, University Press of America (2004) .p.1.

humanist meant the utter belief in the ability of Man for accomplishment and for perfecting himself. In humanist thought, Man is regarded to be the center of the Universe and a part of nature. Man is perceived to be the unique element in life who is capable of self-perfectibility through the power of reason and his rational faculties. In humanism, the dignity of Man and his self-affirmation in all fields are celebrated and respected contrarily to all other ideas and viewpoints that could be the cause for limiting his rational and scientific expansion such as accepted dogmas, unjustified and repetitive superstition, and all unexplained abstractions. Therefore, Man's physical power and intellectual faculties are venerated and prioritized for they are held to be the source of all prospered artistic, scientific, creative, and philosophical performance. Although Humanism, as a stance, is divided into different chains of definitions, it still remains the concept that expresses the necessity of relishing in Man's feats and in his triumph in the development of all masterpieces throughout many domains. Secular Humanism, for instance, leans more towards excluding the spiritual --including religious thought-- as a basis for building morality. This type of Humanism does not exclude the fact that a human being will always remain physically fragile in comparison to nature yet intellectually very powerful. Indeed, it does not accept the idea that Man is superior to any natural forces. Rather, a secular humanist would maintain that Man rely on his thinking and empirical evidence to prove his competence and strength. This type of humanism, which will be our concern-- In this part and in relation to Khalid—introduces Man as a God-like figure but only in the realm of what is seen and felt in nature. As a matter of fact, Man sometimes cannot have the ability to conquer nor to trespass certain spiritual spheres, nor should he feel concerned by them since he must derive all ethical rules based on his own experience and through adopting his reason as a weapon for critical thinking. Secular Humanism, although it excludes religion and forbids it to take a step forward in Man's venture to improve himself, it does not completely reject faith. It only refuses it on the grounds of the dogmatic perceptions it adopts at times, and casts aside its institutionalized aspect framed by priests and men of religion. Thus, Renaissance Humanism is explained by the prioritization of the human dignity and sanctity of both his body and soul. Besides, this type of humanist thought categorized the word "secular" in the same way as Khalid. Indeed, it rather referred to the rejection of all dogmatic assumptions put to the fore by Christianity or Islam, yet without disregarding the faith itself, which was to be regarded as a personal matter. What is important and essential in this thought is that, in the world, Humans are the effectors, and they are the source for the proliferation of all scientific and creativity-based modes of thought, and on the reflective level, they are unconquerable. One of the major Renaissance humanist figures was Pico Della

Mirandola, who, in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man, or the Humanist Manifesto* explains the importance of Man's moral and intellectual perfectibility in order to reach his higher ideals and quests for knowledge, and assert his power in the Universe. Man, by the concept of *Humanitas*, is represented as such in an introduction by Russell Kirk : "Yet all this dignity of human nature was the gift of God: the spiritual and rational powers neglected—and through free will Man is all too able to neglect them—Man sinks to the level of the brutes. The humanist does not seek to dethrone God: instead, through the moral disciplines of *humanitas*, he aspires to struggle upward toward the Godhead."<sup>168</sup> Indeed, according to Russell, the idea of being a humanist does not necessarily dictate being a constant competitiveness with God. Rather, Man is able to expound in his search for knowledge and achieve the highest of levels without pretending to incarnate God himself. For that will be the result of excessive pride or *Hubris*. And when the human being is found to possess such an attitude, his moral and ethical perfectibility would be tarnished. Pico Della Mirandola further defines what it means to be a humanist: "man is the intermediary between creatures, that he is the familiar of the gods above him as he is lord of the beings beneath him; that, by the acuteness of his senses, the inquiry of his reason and the light of his intelligence, he is the interpreter of nature, set midway between the timeless unchanging and the flux of time."<sup>169</sup> This confirms that humans are capable, through knowledge, to establish their position as knowledge seekers and discoverers of their potential through nature. However, they ought not to strive to go beyond God nor "angels" for they have an intermediate position in the scale of existence that they cannot surpass. In *the Book of Khalid*, the protagonist Khalid seems to adopt a humanist stance in many instances of his life. Because he revels in man's greatness--- especially in the United States—and encourages a secular view of a political and religious system without rejecting faith—in Lebanon—. Khalid appears to import Western ideas about the human being and is trying to apply them in his divided East. Such an initiative led to Khalid's persecution again, but this time its source was the Muslim Sheikhs who felt humiliated to hear his blasphemous ideas about excluding Sharia as an inspirer of political rule. Thus, calling for the appreciation of human dignity before religion in front of Islamic fundamentalists and in the heart of one of Damascus' most famous mosques represented a direct insult to those who could not grasp his view on reform, which is for Khalid, a form of internal exile and psychological homelessness. In fact, he was warned of the extremism and intolerance of these

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<sup>168</sup> Pico Della Mirandola, Giovanni. *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. (Robert Caponigri, Trans). Henry Regnery Company. 1956. P.xv.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* p.3-4.

*ulema*:”Do not speak at the Mosque today. I know the people of this City: They are ignorant, obtuse, fanatical, blind. ‘God hath sealed up their hearts and their hearing’. They will not hear thee; they can not understand thee [...] And what Allah hath twisted, man can not straighten. So, let it be. Let them wallow in their ignorance.”<sup>170</sup> Khalid, as a humanist, sought to persuade these Sheikhs that Man is the source of all power, and that all the spiritual dogmas they rely upon in ruling the people, are a mere waste of time because they simply are reserved for their own benefits while the rest of the community rots under the claws of tyranny and ignorance. Khalid illustrates his idea: “Ours in a sense is a theocratic Government. And only by reforming the religion on which it is based, is political reform in any way possible and enduring [...] No; a scientific truth can not be measured by a Koranic epigram: the Koran, a divine guide to life; a work of the heart should not attempt to judge a work of the mind or should be judged by it.”<sup>171</sup>

To conclude this part, Humanism is the idea that humans can surpass themselves and reach a high level of scientific and philosophical knowledge by which they can reform society and bring to the fore the value of human achievement rather than traditional superstitions. Khalid sought to illustrate this point through distinguishing a difference between human power and religion. He believes that being a humanist manifests in the quest to praise Man and consider Him as a guide towards prosperity.

## **2. Humanism in *the Book of Khalid*.**

Rihani’s magnum opus, *the book of Khalid*, is fraught with the protagonist’s endless “rhapsodies” in which visions on the dignity and value of Man, along with his relation to nature, dominate his discourse. In the first part of the book, Khalid holds that, if man is sometimes found in a challenge against the majority, or if he is forced to be the critic and the reformer, that means Man is an entity worthy of recognition and reverence, for the ordinary person is inclined to conform, while the true person who realized and was acquainted with his inner force, despite opposition and attacks, is the genuine embodiment of the core of Humanitas. Khalid begins by forwarding a message to his fellow Man, in which he likens his potential to God, and in which he insists on his creativity to fashion an identity that rises above the belittling divisions tradition and corruption has inflicted upon humanity. Khalid’s

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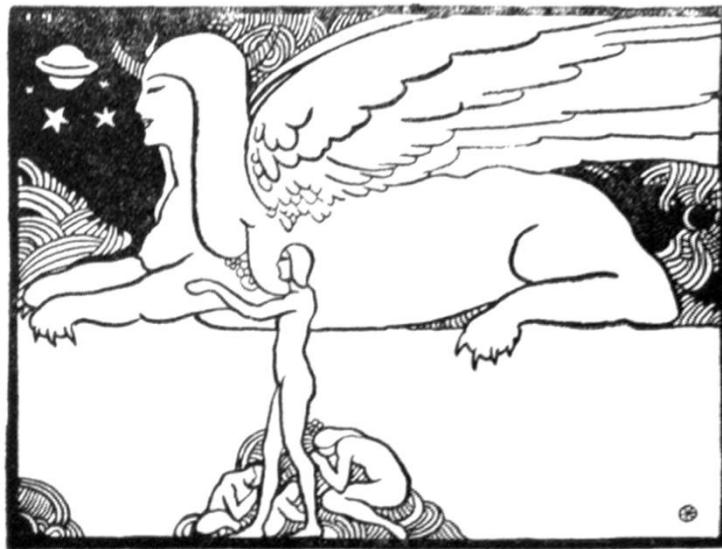
<sup>170</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co.p.284.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*. p.290-291.

cause lies in his eagerness to unite East and West. According to him, the most important factor that would interfere by enhancing this bond is to value Man's intellect which seeks to build a road for communication and establish a link that would encourage societies to go beyond their isolation and narrow-mindedness: This link finds its essence in the acceptance that Man is the holder of the torch of knowledge and union. Khalid explains:

No matter how good thou art, O my Brother, or how bad thou art, no matter how high or how low in the scale of being thou art, I still would believe in thee, and have faith in thee, and love thee [...] Look up, therefore, and behold this World –Temple, which, to us, shall be a resting place, and not a goal. On the border-line of the Orient and Occident it is built [...] No false gods are worshipped in it, -- no philosophic, theologic, or anthropomorphic gods. Yea and the god of the priests and prophets is buried beneath the Fountain, which is the altar of the Temple, and from which flows the eternal spirit of our Maker--.<sup>172</sup>

Khalid's ode is accompanied by an illustration by artist and poet Khalil Gibran:



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In this figure, Gibran clings to the same style of engraving and is faithful to his human shapes and cosmic circles and lines. What is most striking in this artistic accomplishment is the figure of the smiling sphinx, paralleled by an undistinguished human figure walking besides it and holding it as if he were searching for guidance and support. Actually, it is known that the legend of the sphinx is originally Egyptian, and these were built as protectors of tombs and temples. Thus, it could be comprehended that the figure of the sphinx, in this illustration, works to be the defender and savior of Man who “beholds a World-Temple” in his heart. This

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<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* p.9.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



“World-Temple” is where the Divine and prophet-like Man gathers East and West. All human beings in this image seem to be hiding under the sphinx’s large statue. Yet, only one is raised over the others and is chosen by the artist to be their leader. Indeed, that figure represents the humanist Khalid, the one who recognizes the infinite divine essence in Man more than his compatriots, which leads to an intellectual clash between Khalid and the Syrian community that always appears to be scapegoating him.

Moreover, Khalid, such as other humanists, definitely believes in Man as “the measure of all things”, and appreciates his faculties of reason and rationale. However, he adds his own ingredients to the description of his own view of Humanism. In fact, for Khalid, Man is not perfected nor is he the achiever of his own goals neither in life nor in art unless he proves to be a combination of God, Spirit, and Nature. This means that if he should believe in God, it must be done with faith and spirit, not only to use the His name as a goal to benefit himself materially or financially. This “supreme” Man should also create and mold his genius according to what Nature infuses him with. Thus, he needs to selflessly believe in God, while, at the same time, not excluding him from the spiritual and linking him to Nature in order to create and attain the circle of the divine Man, which corresponds to the requirements of Humanitas. With all of these constituents united in his consciousness, Man, according to Khalid, is ready to enact change, reform, and spread knowledge. He illustrates his opinion:

The spiritual and natural are so united, so inextricably entwined around each other, that I can not conceive of them separately, independently. And both in the abstract sense are purportless and ineffectual without Consciousness [...] you may impregnate them with philosophy, nourish them with art; [...] until they find their exponent in Man [...] I tell thee then that Man, that is to say Consciousness, vitalised and purified, in other words Thought—that alone is real and eternal. And Man is supreme, only when he is the proper exponent of Nature, and Spirit, and God: the three divine sources from which he issues, in which he is sustained, and to which he must return. Nature and the spiritual, without this embodied intelligence, this somatic being called man or angel or ape, are as ermine on a wax figure.<sup>174</sup>

Thus, next to the orthodox view on Humanism, and how it should be based on human intelligence and on the capability to explore all earthly domains as long as Man is able to reach them with his rational and reflective assets, Khalid creates an entire new philosophy and adds to the conditions of Humanitas. Indeed, Khalid’s satisfaction with Man is not limited by the

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* p. 222.

latter's greatest of thoughts, but also by his ability to give birth to a mixture where Consciousness, Thought, and Intelligence are interwoven with God, Spirit, and Nature. Besides, When Khalid celebrates his humanist ideals through these principles; this implies not that he disdains the human body or physique. On the contrary---and opposed to Christian Maronite doctrines—Man is completed only when the tangible meets the imagination and the soul. In Christian thought, the body is regarded to be the source of evil and sins. It is neither to be proud of nor to be cherished. However, in “Khalidism”, the body functions as the cradle where Man's faculties, are nurtured, and is compulsory to bring about the Man who identifies with Khalidist humanism. The idea of uniting body and soul as a tool for attaining the perfected human being has Whitmanian echoes. As a matter of fact, Whitman writes in “Song of Myself”: “I am the poet of the Body, And I am the poet of the Soul.”<sup>175</sup> Thus, Khalid seems to relish in both the body and the soul in his description of Man. He explains:

No, the spiritual ought not and can not be free from the sensuous, even the sensual. The true life, the full life, the life, pure, robust, sublime, is that in which all the nobler and higher aspirations of the soul AND THE BODY are given free and unlimited scope, with the view of developing the divine strain in Man [...] God, Nature, Spirit, Passion, [...] -- in some such panorama would I paint the life of a highly developed being. Any of these elements lacking, and the life is wanting, defective, impure.”<sup>176</sup>

Therefore, through Khalid's vision of humanism, he believes that Man in the East or in the West can reach the stream of divinity as long as body and consciousness are always in constant interaction and are perpetually correlated. Indeed, Khalid is a humanist, a traveler, an adopter of a deterritorialized language and identity – in Deuleuzian terms-- , a reformer, a persecuted, and a man who disappears suddenly after his strife for accomplishing his timeless ideas leads to his expulsion from his culture, from his American experience, from established religion, and from Love. It can be concluded that, with his humanist vision inaugurating his thought, Khalid will always be representative of intellectual exile and will never attain a level of mental harmony neither with the Lebanese nor with the Americans.

In the second chapter, I dealt with Khalid's developing thoughts on religion and his obtainment of an unusual explanation for his existence through the philosophy of nature,

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<sup>175</sup> Whitman, Walt. “Song of Myself”. Cornell University Library .p.23. (Original published in 1855).

(<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924022222057#page/n0/mode/2up/search/i+am+the+poet+of+the+body>)

<sup>176</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p. 223.

frowned upon by the Jesuits and the Sheikhs because of its discordance with some of the important tenets of Abrahamic religions. This part basically focused on Khalid's relation to faith and how he conceives and pictures it as separate from the political outlook. Indeed, Khalid had already come up with replacements for traditional religious dogmas and considered them to be a solution to melt and weaken the mental, cultural, and political retrogression of the Lebanese society, --embodied in a non-skeptical appropriation of established religion whether Islam or Christianity--. He sought a more secular, pragmatic, and "modernized" way of life in the "East" as he already figured in America. Yet, he also framed American democracy as "flawed", and criticized it for he wanted it to be more focused on the fundamental and spiritual values of the founding fathers --embedded in social democracy --, rather than on the superficial and senseless act of majority voting. Because Khalid is mainly the character of an ethnic bildungsroman, the gradual sense of his spiritual maturity and intellectual exile could be traced from the day he immigrated to the United States until his disappearance that, according to Todd Fine, indicated "that, at least at present, his synthesis with society is impossible."<sup>177</sup> Besides, "Both Layla Al Maleh (1987) and Geoffrey Nash (1994) have described *The Book of Khalid* as a bildungsroman: a young man matures and develops in both the material and the spiritual sense and interacts with society."<sup>178</sup> This Khalidist attitude rooted in the protagonist's imposed self-distantiation from both societies and his desire to create what is called "the Great City" or his own Utopia caused him to be harassed, maltreated, and unaccepted in societies that are not easily open for change, and vis-a-vis minds that are not effortlessly subjected to an adjustment to Khalid's ideas. As a consequence, the hero, in his quest for transformation, he ventures to triumph over the obstacles, and seeks to overcome the feeling of exile that ceaselessly haunted him throughout his experience. In the last chapter, details on Khalid's grappling with exile and trying to conquer it will be discussed.

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<sup>177</sup> Fine, Todd. "The Book of Khalid and the Rise of David Levinsky Comparison as Ethnic Bildungsroman". In Fine, Todd (Ed), *the Book of Khalid, a Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press. 2016. P. 436.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

*III) Conquering Exile: Khalid's  
Attempts to Tranquilize his Agitated  
Mind and Psyche.*

## A) The Sublimation of Exile.

In *The Book of Khalid*, the protagonist's need for a home resurfaces. When he was still in The United States, he would be always reminded by the far away mountains of Lebanon and by its glowing cedars. First, Khalid was introduced to us as being the: "Descendant of the brave sea-daring Phoenicians [...] and that he was born in the city of Baalbek, in the shadow of the great Heliopolis, a little way from the mountain-road to the Cedars of Lebanon"<sup>179</sup>. This Lebanese man encounters moments in which his memory is thrown back into the enchanting valleys of the Levant. Actually, Khalid, in the novel, narrates a dream he once had about his homeland and its natural scenery :

The cyclamens, the anemones, the daisies,  
I saw them, but I could not speak to them [...]  
O take me back to my own groves, I cried [...]  
I sit me on a bench and weep.  
And in my heart I sing  
O let me be a burro-boy again;  
O let me sleep among the cyclamens  
Of my own land.<sup>180</sup>

In the dream, Khalid appears bitter, homesick, and yearning for the scent of where he first came to life. According to psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, "The dream is not senseless, not absurd...It is a psychic phenomenon of full value, and indeed the fulfillment of a wish."<sup>181</sup> Indeed, being nostalgic and seeking to fulfill an aspiration is a way for Khalid to overcome his homesickness. Thus, sublimating his exile and dreaming of The East seem adequate self-defense mechanisms against the torment this exile inflicts upon the hero. Therefore, this part will be examining the way Khalid challenges exile by explaining the theory of sublimation, by analyzing Khalid's other dreams as a manner by which he handles a resurfaced sense of rejection, and by taking into consideration instances where he briefly transforms his exile into reactions he considers to be methods by which he copes with it.

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<sup>179</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.13.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.* p.52.

<sup>181</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Dover Publications, Inc. 2015. P.93. (Original Published in 1899).

## 1. The Theory of Sublimation:

Originally introduced as a psychoanalytical theory by Sigmund Freud, -- and built on libidinal grounds-- this theory basically alludes to the fact that human beings channel the unacceptable libidinal or sexual energy that lies in the Id, into a more socially acceptable form of activity through art or any other creative initiative. Knowing already that Freud dissects the mind into what is called the Id, -- which is where the libido lies along with all other human sexual drives and impulsive instincts, -- the Superego, -- which represents authority and social constraints, limits, laws, and rules, -- and the Ego --which is defined as the mediator between both, that functions as a bridge establishing an equilibrium between the Superego and the Id, and works as the element that creates a compromise between the excessiveness of the libido and the regulations and control of the Superego, Freud defines sublimation as the operational transformation of these sexual drives into an adequate and admissible activity by which human beings are able to integrate into their societies. Indeed, Volney Patrick Gay explains:

A few find ways to retain their libidinal energies, especially their “pregential” libidinal drives, through a process Freud termed “sublimation.” Some artists find ways to express their libidinal drives in ways that do not threaten the dominant culture... For the most part, Freud says, religion serves the interest of culture by helping those in authority dominate the libidinal drives of its members. Freud could have said that religion serves those in power who use it to dominate others under the guise of “cultural requirement”, but he does not pursue this Marxist explanation of the use of religion. He says religion ameliorates conflicts between self-centeredness and the selflessness which culture requires.<sup>182</sup>

With a special reference on religion, Gay explains that Freud believes it to be one of the supreme cultural, societal, and political powers that inhibit human beings from their sexual freedom and forbids the expression of the libido on this ground. Freud also states that if the process of sublimation—which is voluntary and effected through free will—does not take place or is not implemented within Man, the latter risks, as a consequence, of being subjected to pathologies, and he or she could develop neurosis and end up as a neurotic. Contrarily to Freud, Carl Gustav Jung introduces a slightly different approach on sublimation. While Freud asserts --in *Between Sessions and Beyond the Couch* edited by Joan Raphael-Leff, -- that “The task here, is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this, sublimation of the instincts lends it assistance. One

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<sup>182</sup> Gay, Volney Patrick. *Freud on Sublimation, Reconsiderations*. State University of New York Press.1992. p.7.

gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychological and intellectual work”<sup>183</sup>, Jung believes that sublimation is not mechanical nor is it voluntary. Rather, he holds that sublimation is spontaneous and is characteristic of being “alchemical”. Jung explains: “*Sublimatio* is part of the royal art where the true gold is made. Of this Freud knows nothing, worse still, he barricades all the paths that could lead to the true *Sublimatio*. This is just about the opposite of what Freud understands by sublimation. It is not a voluntary and forcible channeling of instinct into a spurious field of application, but an *alchymical* transformation ...”<sup>184</sup> Thus, both theories, although lightly different, can serve the situation of our protagonist in *the Book of Khalid*. In fact, Freud maintains that dreams are a way of the manifestation of the unconscious and they can also be part of the sublimation process. Also, the Superego is embodied by the control religion gains over human lives, which is a context Khalid denounces. Moreover, some involuntary transformations of exile by Khalid happen spontaneously and without a direct decision from the hero which further reinforces his unconscious attempts at vanquishing exile.

To conclude, both Freud and Jung’s theories assist us in scrutinizing and evaluating Khalid’s psychological relation with the feeling of exile. In fact, he craves to definitively conquer this sense of homelessness, intellectual marginalization, and homesickness –in the physical and abstract sense of the term-- resulting from his explorative journey by taking advantage of his dreams as a refuge, and “orientalizing” America while “westernizing” Lebanon as a self-defense mechanism against loneliness.

## **2. Signs of Exile and Coping Mechanisms.**

Khalid and Shakib “said once of America: a most beautiful country with one single vice—it makes foreigners forget their native land...It is perfect, heavenly, ideal. In it one sees only the vices of other races, and the ugliness of other nations.”<sup>185</sup> Indeed, when the two Lebanese young men arrived to the New World, it seemed as if they had stepped into the sacred soil of the new, industrialized and “modern” Promised Land. Although this voyage had produced in them a great sense of fascination and an intense enchantment with the

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<sup>183</sup> Taylor Robinson, Helen. “Notes on Sublimation, Psychoanalysis and the Sublime” In Raphael-Leff, Joan (Ed) *Between sessions and Beyond the Couch*. University of Essex.2002.p.246.

<sup>184</sup> Jung, Carl Gustav. *Letters of C.G Jung: Volume I, 1906-1950*. Routledge and Kagan Paul. 1973. P.171.

<sup>185</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co.p.121.

economic and social prosperity the United States was characterized by, it nevertheless left psychological residues of depression, emotional gloominess, and desperation. As newly-arrived immigrants, their integration was not an easy task especially that they were brought up in an extremely different cultural environment. Besides, Khalid and Shakib, along with other Lebanese travelers making their way into the “gate of Paradise”<sup>186</sup>, were not met with the civility and attentiveness they were aspiring for when they first set foot in New York, which was of the first reasons that shook both Khalid and Shakib’s confidence in the security they hoped this New World would provide them with. Indeed, Khalid denounced the disrespect and ignorance awaiting them and was shocked to learn that “even in the land of equal rights and freedom”, immigrants are not perceived as human beings. They are rather objectified, marginalized, and belittled because of the local fear of these immigrants “invading” the country. In America, Khalid had to make a strong effort in order to be able to integrate peacefully and smoothly into a “Western” society. However, despite using peddling—a sign of Christendom--, which is almost the only way by which he and his friend wanted to shed light on their existence in New York, it seemed that his identity of a Lebanese was never ready to be given up, nor cast away on the detriment of a an American lifestyle. Indeed, whenever Khalid saw the Statue of Liberty, he also imagined, --standing next to it-- the eternal Cedars of Lebanon. He was not able to effect a separation between these two identities, nor was he capable of merging both while living in the United States. At first, Khalid believed that discovering the world and exiting the small territories of the Levant would enable him to shape his personality and gain an experience by which he would be proud, gain self-esteem, and flourish on the educational level. He thought: “Whether for better or for worse, does not the immigrant place himself above his country, his people and his Government, when he turns away from them, when he goes forth propelled by that inner self which demands of him a new life ?”<sup>187</sup>As a matter of fact, Khalid believed in the necessity of crossing physically and emotionally the geography and the culture in order to thrive and construct a new independent self not enclosed by the authority of one’s family, religion, or despotic government. Yet, all of these ambitions had inevitable repercussions. At some point in Khalid’s journey, it is recited by Shakib that his friend started a process of self-humiliation and self-degradation. He would disregard his personal health and hygiene. He would also be careless about his appearance. Shakib recounts Khalid’s situation: “Even his hair, a fantastic fatuity behind a push-cart, he did not take the trouble to cut or trim...But this constancy,

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* p.37.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.



never before sustained to such a degree, must soon cease, having laid up, thanks to his pushcart and the people of the Bronx, enough to carry him, not only to Baalbek, but to *Aymakanenkan*”<sup>188</sup> Here, Shakib asserts that this state of self-denigration has persisted with Khalid everywhere( the equivalent in Arabic is *Aymakanenkan*) he went and was not merely temporary. The psychoanalytical response to such an attitude forwards that these are signs of trauma. Indeed, Khalid had already left his country and is now an exile because of the difficulties of integration. He also lost his position at Tammany hall because of his belief in “morality”. Khalid’s psychological damage was a reaction to the rejection he is faced with on all levels. According to Sigmund Freud, “Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.”<sup>189</sup>This definition is applicable to Khalid the immigrant, for certainly, with his encounter with Boss O’Graft and his imprisonment, Khalid had started to witness the gradual and slow withering of his ideals based on honesty for America, which placed him in a marginalized position on the political level. Thus, it could be possible to describe, at first, Khalid as being in mourning. This loss of gusto towards life is also in common with melancholia. Yet, Freud insists that someone who suffers from mourning cannot be the subject of any pathology, while the melancholic subject is. He explains: “The analogy with mourning let us to conclude that he had suffered a loss in regard to an object, what he tells us [the melancholic] points to a loss in regard to his ego.”<sup>190</sup> Therefore, in analyzing Khalid’s coping mechanism with the distressful happenings throughout his journey in America, it could be concluded that he simply was not able to “sublimate” this troublesome energy into a more creative action; rather, he reluctantly received the pathological consequences, which reinforces his image as a victim of exile and as a “martyr”. In addition, it is written by Shakib, in his *Histoire Intime* that Khalid admitted to being a prey to insomnia: “I could not sleep, nor on the spring-bed, nor on the floor. It is two hours past midnight now, and I shall try to while away the time by scrawling this to you. My Brother, I can not long support this sort of life, being nor more fit for rough, ignominious labor.”<sup>191</sup>In fact, symptoms such as insomnia, melancholia, or repulsive self-negligence can be regarded as the results of some neurotic problem. This neurotic issue could be traced back to what is called: Post Traumatic Embitterment Disorder or PTED. In their book entitled

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.* p.120.

<sup>189</sup>Freud, Sigmund. *Mourning and Melancholia*. The Hogarth Press.1917. P. 243.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.* p.247.

<sup>191</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911.p. 123.

*Embitterment: Societal, Psychological, and Clinical Perspectives*, Linden and Maercker define PTED as “characterized by prolonged and disabling embitterment reactions in the aftermath of negative life events”<sup>192</sup> It is a psychological disease that affects people who had already been the subjects of a damaging life-event and those who had experienced shocking moments are mainly targeted by it. Indeed, people with this disease start to have a retrogressive visualization of their lives and this perception starts to show outwardly and become reflected on the physical level. Khalid, as a person who seems to undergo this syndrome, cannot be perceived as an exile who was able to conquer or sublimate his sense of homesickness, at least during those moments of his life in America. In spite of his unsuccessful attempts at triumphing over the psychological problems he went through because of his displacement, Khalid did not hesitate to temporarily look for home in both food and books, although these are events taking place before he began grappling with insomnia. Indeed, the Lebanese traditional cuisine, along with setting “himself to the task of self-education”<sup>193</sup> were Khalid’s solace and comfort whenever he felt attacked by the torment of exclusion. Yet, strangely enough, “after reading or studying a book, he warms his hands upon its flames, this Khalid, or makes it serve to cook a pot of *mojaddarah*. In this extraordinary and outrageous manner, barbarously capricious, he would baptize the ideal in the fire of the real.”<sup>194</sup> *Mojaddarah* is defined as:

A common dish of cooked lentils, often with groats, wheat, or rice and with roasted onions sautéed in vegetable oil. It is seen as a typical poor man’s dish...In the Bible, Esau, the oldest son of Isaac, sells his birthright to Jacob in exchange for a plate of lentils (a mourning dish that Jacob had made for his father, Isaac, upon the death of Abraham).<sup>195</sup>

Thus, consuming *mojaddarah* can be a sign of Khalid’s physical and emotional precariousness. In cooking, the protagonist makes use of a book’s pages to make fire. This implies that he seeks to ground the ideals he learns from his book into the real world. He is hopelessly and symbolically aiming at rooting his principles in his modest lifestyle, which is already exemplified by his “poor man” dish. Indeed, Khalid is vainly endeavoring to transform those abstractions and philosophies epitomized by “immanent morality” into his

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<sup>192</sup> Linden, Michael, et Andreas Maercker. *Embitterment: Societal, Psychological, and Clinical Perspectives*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2011. .p.30.

<sup>193</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.53.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>195</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid A Critical Edition*. Todd Fine. (Ed). Syracuse University Press. 2016. p.476.

quotidian. Besides, he might also be ineffectually performing a cleansing ritual in which the intangible is transformed into the practical in order to ease his marginalized soul and find his way into integration. Furthermore, although *Mojaddarah* is not a dish for the wealthy, and is rather made for those who mourn, it is also regarded to be Khalid's medicinal meal. Indeed, *mojaddarah* is where Khalid buries his depressed soul. He actually seeks this therapeutic dish in order to sublimate his neurosis by consuming it. The narrator describes Khalid's relationship to this type of food:

"*Mojadderah*", writes Khalid, "has a marvellous effect upon my humour and nerves...but *mojadderah* has such a soothing effect on the nerves; it conduces to cheerfulness...After a good round pewter platter of this delicious dish and a dozen leeks, I feel as if I could do all the work of mankind...I wonder not at Esau's extravagance, when he saw a steaming mess of it. For what is a birthright in comparison?"<sup>196</sup>

Khalid also believes it to be the source of his strength and comfort for it reminds of Lebanon and alleviates the burden of being in far away land.

Finally, it is quite clear that Khalid is a subject for suffering and pathology rather than healthy sublimation of his anxiety as an immigrant. His position as such obliged him to become the victim rather than the conqueror of his own exile. Yet, Khalid still unconsciously continues to find the right path towards liberating his injured psyche, and for channeling his disruption and perturbation into a more healthy direction.

### 3. Exile and the Dream.

"The notion of exile oscillates between two ideas: that of separation and that of community. The idea of separation, physical severance of an individual from his or her homeland has moral, cultural and existential repercussions."<sup>197</sup>In Khalid's situation, it could be noticed that his cultural estrangement reemerged in psychological forms that could be analyzed on the psychoanalytical level. Indeed, the Lebanese protagonist, during his voyage with Shakib, and before arriving to Ellis Island-- the gate towards the enchanted world of freedom, independence, and glory-- recounts that he had witnessed a special kind of dream in his sleep. In fact, he tells his friend that he dreamt of being an Arab *Emir*, or prince, and that everybody around him would applaud and send him signs of respect and reverence. Yet, the dream was, in

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<sup>196</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.46.

<sup>197</sup> Olszewska, Kinga. *Wanderers across Language. Exile in Irish and Polish Literature of the Twentieth Century*. Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing. 2007. p.7.

a way, blurry and he did not know which kingdom he ruled in spite of all the charm and magic he felt. He says:

For I have dreamt last night” he continues, “that, in the multicoloured robes of an Arab Emir, on a caparisoned dromedary, at the head of an immense multitude of people, I was riding through the desert. Whereto and wherefrom, I know not. But those who followed me seemed to know; for they cried, ‘Long have we waited for thee, now we shall enter in peace...I was then escorted through the gates, into the City [...] where I was awaited by their Princess.’<sup>198</sup>

Here, the dream came as a prophetic revelation to Khalid foreshadowing the latter’s imminent exile. Indeed, when interpreted, this dream seems to embody the prophethood of the hero, and his position as the chosen figure who unsuccessfully seeks to empower the “East” through the political and religious freedom of the “West”, and imbue this “West” with some of the spiritual impulses of his “East”. He is also the prophet who “comes to an early conclusion that the Great City he is looking for should be a city of virtues, and love stands at the top of these virtues as a motivating power.”<sup>199</sup>. As a matter of fact, in the dream, a woman also comes to “prostrate” under Khalid’s feet and murmur her whispers and wishes to God in his name. This image further reinforces the fact that the protagonist came across a revelatory vision, as the prophets generally have, that he will probably represent a life guide for all of these strange people. However, the pessimistic side of the dream lies in the fact that Khalid does not realize which “city” he will be in charge of, or which people exactly are those who are going to pay him respect and reverence. This indicates that his future is unknown and will always be which matches his eventual fate in the book. Moreover, the dream expresses his yet-to-come exile in the West, as well as his already-estranged psyche from his original land. Indeed, the dream is revealed in a period of Khalid’s life where he is still geographically in-between the two identities: He witnessed this dream on the “deck”. It is the watershed that offers Khalid the opportunity to seriously reflect upon his identity. From a psychoanalytical point of view, the dream, in the words of Sigmund Freud:

Takes its place in the concatenation of the waking psychic actions which are intelligible to us, and it has been built up by a highly complicated intellectual activity. But at the very moment when we are inclined to rejoice in this discovery, a crowd of questions overwhelms us. If the

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<sup>198</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.34.

<sup>199</sup> Albert Rihani, Ameen. “The Great City” in *ar-Rihaniyyat* and *The Book of Khalid*”. In Fine, Todd (Ed), *The Book of Khalid, a Critical Edition*. Syracuse University Press. 2016. P.420.

dream, according to the interpretation, represents a wish fulfilled, what is the cause of the peculiar and unfamiliar manner in which this fulfillment is expressed?<sup>200</sup>

According to Freud, dreams are the replacements for wishes, which alludes to the fact that Khalid has an unconscious desire to fulfill the place of an upcoming prophet or “king”: that of both American and Lebanese cultures, and the first “hybrid” prophet who would encompass in his message the importance of secularism and the divinity of humans and nature rather than a metaphysical God. Indeed, he would probably have wished to incarnate the image of a “secular prophet”. Fulfilling wishes in dreams implies that Khalid aims at sublimating his reality of being a “random” and poor immigrant with no future plans lingering above the horizon of his mind into a more creative state of being, even if it had to be externalized by the dream of becoming an exile. Thus, Khalid, at the same time, sublimates his physical estrangement from his homeland in the dream, and, strangely enough, simultaneously strives to become a prophet, which is also another way to become alienated, but pictured in a nobler form.

Therefore, Khalid experiments with a dream in which he appears to be a character from ancient Arab Medieval times and in which he pictures himself as the Prince of a nameless land and people. This explains his willingness to become an exiled man, and exteriorizes his own wish for prophethood, if the theory by Freud is taken into consideration. However, if the theory of “alchemical” and involuntary sublimation by Jung is applied, it can be perceived that Khalid’s dream came as a spontaneous expression of his physical exile, that is, it was a natural transformational consequence of his physical and territorial estrangement into the enchanting vision of a prince, highly honored and beloved, contrarily to the inhumane behavior that the responsible for the immigration ship exhibited towards him and his friend in real life. Sublimation is complex, in this case, for it is sometimes, not completely metamorphosed in Khalid’s dream and it only changes its pattern. However, Khalid would later seek to conquer this intellectual homelessness by the use of his conspicuous and discernible sense of humour.

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<sup>200</sup> Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. A.A. Brill (Trans). Dover Publications, Inc. 2015.p .93. (Original published in 1899).

## B) Humor and Exile: How Can the First Conquer the Second?

According to David Patterson: “The exile’s absence from home must come to signify and thus affirm the presence of a home in a place that is eternally elsewhere, forever under erasure.”<sup>201</sup> Indeed, Patterson describes the plight of an exile; someone who is in constant search for a home, whether physical or spiritual. An exile needs a refuge where he could be understood, embraced, and offered a warm sense of belonging without strife or struggle. In fact, Khalid faced rejection from his family, the clergy, and both the Eastern and Western communities. When he was in the United States, the hero seemed to capture the essence of his country wherever he parted and whenever he scrutinized people. This is the way through which he kept an equilibrium of being both the American and the Lebanese. Moreover, he expressed himself in a humoristic manner. For instance, Khalid made an amusing comment on the appearance of American women and evoked the Lebanese ones while having a conversation with his friend Shakib: “‘It is not strange’, said he, ‘how the women here indraw their stomachs and outdraw their hips? And is not this the opposite of the shape which our women cultivate?’”<sup>202</sup> As a matter of fact, Nietzsche develops his own theory about humor. Indeed, he admits that those who most suffer and struggle are those who possess great sense of humor because they need laughter to dwarf their broken spirits and triumph over the torment of estrangement. As for Khalid, in order to surpass his uneasiness with the American values and political society, he got hold of humor as his weapon against his feelings of being exiled and ignored. For example, Nietzsche writes: “Perhaps I know best why man is the only animal that laughs: he alone suffers so excruciatingly that he was compelled to invent laughter. The unhappiest and most melancholy animal is, as might have been expected, the most cheerful.”<sup>203</sup>

As a conclusion, Khalid makes use of the comic in order to trivialize the tragic. Therefore, in this part, I will be examining different definitions on laughter and humour, analyzing

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<sup>201</sup> Patterson, David. *Exile: The Sense of Alienation in Modern Russian Letters*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015.P.167.

<sup>202</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*, Dodd, Mead, and Co.1911. p .49.

<sup>203</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. A.M. Ludovici. Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis (Trans).1909. p.74.

Khalid's blatant sarcasm, and explaining the benefit of clinging to such an attitude, especially during the lowest moments of sadness and sorrow one encounters in their life.

## **1. Defining Humour.**

Humour can be equated with laughter and it can also be manifested through sarcasm. It is basically defined, on the scientific and physical levels, to be a reaction to a certain external or internal stimuli originating from another person or situation, or to be tracing its roots to the laughing person's thoughts. Indeed, expressing such a reaction can be indicative of a positive emotional state underlying wit, comedy, and irony. Although laughter, in general, is associated with merriment, it can also find its origins in contradictory negative feelings such as embarrassment, confusion, fear, or perturbation. Laughter or humour can also be apparent in one's initiative to make an apology or give an irrational excuse to someone about something that had taken place. Besides, having a sense of humour, along with laughter can be contagious and, therefore, disseminate among many people who are in the company of a person diffusing such energy. Thus, laughter is a human response to a certain trigger or instigation. Furthermore, humour is also willingly introduced into the field of alternative medicine on therapeutic grounds as a healer for people with anxiety, neurosis, depression, and chronic stress or pain. Indeed, it is a natural cure for both psychological and physical agony and discomfort. The analgesic features of laughter are confirmed by specialists and encouraged to be more popular among those who are chronically overwhelmed by negative responses to life events, to estrangement, to solitude, and to alienation. People who lack social interactions are more likely to be subjects for easy mourning and are more inclined to revel in their emptiness and isolation, and to victimize themselves. Sometimes, some people choose to be secluded as a manner for breaking with the daily unbearable burdens of the family, of work, or even of their own distorted visions about their appearance or self-esteem. Thus, acquiring a sense of humour and using it as a device against the negative energy and the pessimism that could surround it, is crucial to maintain personal psychological balance and always preserve a gleam of hope and optimism in one's most devastating moments. In her book entitled *Healing From Depression*, Stella Okoronkwo writes:

A researcher says that: the ability to laugh at a situation or problem gives us a feeling of superiority and power. Humour and laughter can foster a positive and hopeful attitude. We are less likely to succumb to feelings of depression and helplessness if we are able to laugh at what

is troubling us. Humour gives us a sense of perspective on our problems. Laughter provides an opportunity for the release of those uncomfortable emotions which, if held inside, may create [...] changes that are harmful to the body.<sup>204</sup>

And because the exile—such as Khalid-- might be a subject of psychological dilemmas and neurotic problems, introducing laughter and humour for such a patient is able to wipe off the remains of a depressive protagonist. In fact:

The exile finds himself in two different centers: his being is concentrated on the land left behind, as well as on the new land, whose customs need to be integrated with the ones from home [...] the exile is excluded from the mother tongue, familiar places, sentiments, memory and cultural heritage. Separation also induces an identity crisis...<sup>205</sup>

Thus, because the exilic is a subject who is more prone to confronting inner turmoil and crisis, and since it s referred earlier that Khalid had already exhibited symptoms of a neurosis; humour is considered to be the solution to alleviate the exile's state of chaos and neglectfulness. Yet, it should be mentioned that, although Khalid is the sufferer, he is also the healer.

In conclusion, humour is not merely a regular human trait or a simple reaction to an amusing stimulation or laughable situation; it represents one of the human beings' personal and innate self-defense mechanisms against their own fallacies and dark moments. Humour is rather therapeutic and it lingers there, within our senses, until it bursts to fight people's anguish and melancholy. That is why exploring *The Book of Khalid*, from this perspective, will allow for a deeper comprehension of the protagonist's relation to exile.

## **2. Humour in *The Book of Khalid*.**

In the book, the reader can detect, at several instances, the sense of humour that characterizes the protagonist, and the sharp and sarcastic tone the Editor and even Khalid use in their discourse. At first, it is probable that Rihani chose to allocate this tone to the characters in the book in order to highlight the unrealistic perfectionism and the idealism of the Protagonist. Indeed, Khalid goes through a remarkable and fast transformation from being a simple-minded muleteer in the Lebanese villages, to a philosopher, hermit, a worshipper of nature, and a

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<sup>204</sup> Okoronkwo, Stella. *Healing from Depression*. Uzima Press. 2003. p.46.

<sup>205</sup> Olszewska, Kinga. *Wanderers Across Language. Exile in Irish and Polish Literature of the Twentieth Century*. Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing. 2007. p.7.



prophet. Although Khalid's thought is quite revolutionary and exceptionally wise, and despite his intelligence and aptitude to become a spokesperson about religious reform, about spiritual "mazes", and about political corruption, Khalid was always perceived as a man who follows his own instincts and someone who improvises his sudden principles. Besides, Khalid seemed to go through a fast change in perception that sometimes might lack a fundamental base, or may trace its roots to his shock and disillusionment. For instance, he was born in a Maronite Christian family. However, he switches to attending lectures on atheism and non-religiosity after he travels to America, and appears quite convinced by them. Afterwards, he does not appear to settle on a sole conviction. Rather, he moves on to discovering the transcendentalist wanderings and their whereabouts, and then abandons what he learns about atheism. Later, Khalid meets Mrs. Gotfry, who is a Buhaist. In fact, Buhaism is "A religion founded in nineteenth-century Persia that advances that all religions are unified [...] the faith's doctrine argues that there is now an urgent need for global unity."<sup>206</sup> and becomes infatuated by the workings of her mind and the global value this religion advances. Furthermore, he decides that the Abrahamic religions such as Christianity and Islam should be the subjects for reform and "modernization" in order to suit people's needs through separating them from the political realm, which consequently leads him to incarceration by the *Ulema* and his excommunication by the Jesuits. Thus, Khalid's experience, although rich, proves to be the result of the frivolous actions of a young man who is captivated by his own ability to detect flaws in his communities. Indeed, Khalid is not pragmatic, and prefers to cause harm to his family and to himself rather than apply the rules and maintain his dignity and safety. His rebellion, although necessary, also demonstrates a constant psychological agitation and an unsettling spirit. Khalid burns pamphlets because he holds that they should be cleansed by the real world. He refers to women engaged in prostitution as *huris* --which are supposed to be defined as chaste or virgin women in the Islamic tradition--. He also pretends to be "a Dervish at the door of Allah"<sup>207</sup> while knocking the door of a sexual worker. Finally, the editor humoristically recounts Khalid's brief "romances" and comments on women in New York's Bohemia, and writes in Khalid's words:

It is written in the K. L. MS. That women either bore, or inspire, or excite. "The first and the last are to be met with anywhere; but the second? [...] when you meet the woman that inspires, you will begin to yearn for the woman that excites." And here, the hospitality of the Dervish does not belie his Arab blood. In Bohemia, the bonfire of his heart was never extinguished, and

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<sup>206</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid, a Critical Edition*. Todd Fine (Ed), Syracuse University Press. 2016. p.457.

<sup>207</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. p.83.

the wayfarers stopping before his tent, be they of those who bored, or excited, or inspired, were welcome guests for at least three days and nights. And in this he follows the rule of hospitality among his people.<sup>208</sup>

Indeed, the editor is ironical and mocks Khalid's prurience by calling it the "hospitality of his Arab blood". Khalid also provides the reader his own categorization of women and insists that he cannot choose only one for they are different in character, and a man ought to switch from one woman to another in order to avoid boredom. In this situation, Rihani seems to remind the reader of *Shahrayar*, the Prince of the Arab nights who murders a wife and marries another not because of boredom, but rather out of fear she would betray him. Still, Khalid is a comical reproduction of *Shahrayar* in his inconsistent preferences for women.

Thus, humour penetrates the text and Rihani does not hesitate to mix the serious and with comic in order to praise Khalid's experiences at times, yet to also aggrandize his unreliability as a character, especially that he is an idealist who cannot wittily perform change, but rather plunges directly into hazardous behavior, always leading him into trouble and punishment. Moreover, Khalid's humor functions as a self-defense mechanism against his persecution, whether in the United States or Lebanon. Indeed, humour lifted up Khalid's spirit throughout his entire phenomenal journey.

### **3. Humor Against Exile.**

Exile, for the subject who suffers from it, is a state of utter distress and in-betweenness. The exilic person is always in a state of hesitation between two countries, two cultures, and two worlds. Indeed, exile is rather problematic because it does not simply lie in the psychological realm. It rather moves towards the intellectual and introduces along with it a new vision of a world fraught with dualities in a way that prompts the exiled person to discard all accepted definitions about identity and bring to the fore only one, which is a reconciling synthesis between the country he left, and the place he dwells in. In order to provide relief to such a character,--Khalid--, Rihani makes use of the comic facet and employs it as a cathartic instrument for the exile in crisis. Indeed, Khalid finds comfort in his laughter with Shakib and vis-à-vis other events in his life because he is aware that humor trivializes his total plight. For instance, Friedrich Nietzsche perceives laughter as a human invention that only functions to ease a Man's psyche. He explains: "Perhaps I know best why man is the only animal that laughs: he alone suffers so excruciatingly that he was *compelled* to invent laughter. The

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<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91-92.

unhappiest and most melancholy animal is, as might have been expected, the most cheerful.”<sup>209</sup> Nietzsche asserts that the most painful feeling in man compels him to produce laughter, not by choice, but rather by obligation because it constitutes a cure for his ailed and damaged spirit. In this context, Khalid/Rihani chooses to embroider the story with humor in order to make the reader forget about Khalid’s hardships and heartbreaking circumstances. Moreover, Nietzsche holds that laughter can be a tool against the inability of people to explain existence. Indeed, Khalid was not able to provide an explanation for his existence unless he made an effort to do so by trying to explore the malfunctions in the East and West. Khalid, throughout his journey ventured to change his ideas according to the situation he finds himself in. Yet, it is noticed that when he becomes restless, he simply finds the comic as a refuge. Indeed, according to John Lippitt, in his essay “Existential Laughter”, Nietzsche believes that “the comic”<sup>210</sup> can be an “artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity”.<sup>211</sup> Because life appears absurd and not worthy of living at times, especially for Khalid who vainly fights for his ideals, laughter is a creation by which this nihilism and meaninglessness perish and disintegrate. Furthermore, like Khalid, Nietzsche condemns who forbid laughter, precisely the “founders of moralities and religions”<sup>212</sup> whom he calls “teachers of the purpose of existence”<sup>213</sup>. Indeed, Khalid despises men of religion because of their corruption and their ostentatious display of a false explanation of faith based on benefitting themselves financially and discarding the individuals’ needs in a society. These men are described as the forbidders of the comic under the pretext that humans should not sin by laughing at their existence and must rather take it seriously. However, the comic spirit of the Book of Khalid never seems to desert its pages. Lippitt writes that Nietzsche, in *Zarathustra*, recounts that the prophet announces laughter to be holy, for it is one of the “worldly comforts”<sup>214</sup> and addresses people

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<sup>209</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. A.M. Ludovici (Trans). Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, (1909), p.74.

<sup>210</sup> Lippitt, John. “Existential Laughter”. 1996. p.2.  
[http://researchprofiles.herts.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/existential-laughter\(e9283641-a3bc-424a-b4d8-c094231d6c9e\).html](http://researchprofiles.herts.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/existential-laughter(e9283641-a3bc-424a-b4d8-c094231d6c9e).html)

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.* p.1.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* p.2.

by telling them: “No! You ought to learn the art of this worldly comfort first; you ought to learn to laugh, my young friends, if you are hell-bent on remaining pessimists.”<sup>215</sup>

To conclude, Nietzsche, like Khalid, appears to venerate laughter for its curative potential and its ability to belittle existence in a way that does not frighten human beings from their inevitable fates. Indeed, laughter and humour hover above *The Book of Khalid* for the hero is but a Man who seeks answers through his troublesome and tumultuous paths, and is a person who is in need for this type of therapy in order to tranquilize himself and vanquish exile as a way to unite and reconcile two worlds in perpetual cultural rivalry: the “East” and the “West”.

### C) Reconciling the East and the West: Rihani’s Endeavor to Unify Greater Syria with America Through Khalid’s Experience:

Ameen Rihani, through the hero Khalid, tried to give birth to a new identity where both American and Syria meet and establish a connection that lasts through a fruitful exchange in culture, language, and religion. Therefore, Khalid’s life story represented an adventure in which the hero wanted to assume and ground his inexorable duality. In fact, in the beginning of the book, it is noticed that Khalid’s manuscript, found in the Khedivial Library, had peculiar images on its cover:

“The present Editor was attracted to it by the dedication and the rough drawings on the cover [...] One of these is supposed to represent a New York Skyscraper in the shape of a pyramid , the other is a dancing group under which is written : “The Stockbrokers and the Dervishes.”<sup>216</sup>

These drawings highlight Khalid’s utopian conception of a world where both the Middle East and The New World complete each other. Through this peculiar, yet enchanting and paradoxical images, Khalid wants to create a piece of art that symbolizes the possible harmony between two faraway lands. This would pave the way for the protagonist to defeat his sense of being exiled and unaccepted by any of the two communities. Indeed, Wail Hassan confirms that Arab American scholars had a mission to effectuate, which was: “To replace Orientalist

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<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*, Melville House Publishing.p.3. ( originally published by Dodd Mead and Co 1911)

valuations with a model of duality without hierarchy, whereby the contrasting essences were seen as existing in a sort of metaphysical equilibrium and reciprocity.”<sup>217</sup>

Thus, through mingling East and West, Khalid can finally acknowledge a harmonious self that takes into consideration two identities that survive together and triumph over the hero’s intellectual isolation and spiritual imprisonment.

## **1. The unity of Being:**

In both Rihani and Khalid’s visions, the unity of being always manifested itself in the act of uniting humanity to become one and to incarnate a synthesis by which the two cultures of the East and the West can peacefully coexist. Reconciling both parts in the goal of achieving human understanding and shortening geographical distances for the sake of mutual economic, cultural, social, and human benefit, was also one of Khalid’s most highly-perceived ideals. He maintained that the great “descendants of the Phoenicians” along with the Americans, can establish a dialogue through which rivalry and paradox would no longer be present. Indeed, what destroys the act of uniting these people, according to Rihani, is to ignore the bridges to communication and interaction. He feels that both nations are too enclosed and isolated to be venturing such a globalist initiative. Besides, the tyrannical political credo did not match the freedom and the human rights the Western subject was living under. Thus, a dialogue between a free and an “imprisoned” man was incongruous to achieve a balance. Indeed, the free man would not conceive the suffering of another who lacks the basics of citizenship and who is unfamiliar with his own rights towards himself and his duties towards others. While a man living under these circumstances would not be able to digest the values of liberty, of human self-respect and of the preservation of one’s dignity on the political and social levels. Therefore, the bridge to be built in order to achieve this unity will not be based upon political grounds. First, humanity is the most obvious common denominator between peoples all over the world. That is why Khalid and Rihani assume a humanist vision above all religious or political differences. Indeed, Rihani believes that it is no longer necessary to shift each country’s political sphere or change it as a tool towards bridging the gaps between America

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<sup>217</sup> Hassan, Wail S. « The Rise of Arab-American Literature: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani ». *American Literary History* 20.1-2 (2008).p.251.

and Lebanon. Rather, the solution that must be enacted is based upon a human shared feeling of tolerance, peace, and Love to conquer exile and exclusion. Ameen Albert Rihani confirms:

It is obvious here that Rihani wanted to shift the debate between East and West from politics to morals, from a discussion of ethnic interests to one of human values. He believed that a true and lasting reconciliation of East and West could not rest upon political foundations alone: it must be an ethical and intellectual rapprochement as well, strong enough to undergird a bridge of common recognition and love of the other.<sup>218</sup>

Thus, Rihani aspired, through Khalid, to institute religious harmony before venturing to find any other sources for mutual understanding. In his poem, “The Two Brothers”, Rihani features the precondition of the value of brotherhood in the name of blood and humanity above each person’s religious affiliation. Brotherhood, for Rihani stands on realizing that human beings are the children of one universe that conceived them. He writes:

IN the grotto the forest designed,  
Where the fire-fly first dreamed of the sun,  
And the cricket first chirped to the blind  
Zoophyte, -- in the cave of the mind  
We were born and our cradle is one.  
I am God: thou art Man: but the light  
That mothers the planets, the sea  
Of star-dust that roofs every height  
Of the Universe, the gulfs of the night,--  
They are surging in thee as in me.<sup>219</sup>

In the poem, Rihani seems to insist upon the concept of unity between all without regard to a more powerful spiritual force guiding humans. Indeed, he appears to adhere to a Sufist stance in which the human being is in its ultimate union and fusion with God that inhabits him and makes him, eventually, feel that he had reached a high level of serenity and poise, that enable

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<sup>218</sup> Albert Rihani, Ameen. “Cross-Cultural Approaches to Reconciliation: Ameen Rihani and H.G Wells.” In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004.p.16.

<sup>219</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *A Chant of Mystics and Other Poems*. The Rihani House. 1970. P.81. (Original published in New York in 1921).

him to drop all prejudices about humans and cling to the common heart that invisibly links them all. Indeed, in the book, Khalid refers to himself more than once as being a “Dervish” meaning the follower or the traveler. These people, named Dervishes are the representatives of the Sufist belief. In order to perfect their ultimate affinity with god, they generally perform a symbolic dance which is believed to lift their souls up the ground, for them to finally come into contact with all divine essence elsewhere. Indeed, one of the pioneers of Sufist thinking is *Ibn Arabi* who is quite known for his principle of the Unity of Being or in Arabic (*Wihdat Al Woujoud*). Rihani, in his poem “A Sufi Song” writes:

My heart’s the rug I spread for thee,  
For thee to dance or pray or sleep;  
My heart’s the pearls I thread for thee,  
For thee to wear or break or keep;  
My heart’s a sack of magic things—  
Magic carpets, caps and rings—  
To bring thee treasures from afar  
And from the deep.<sup>220</sup>

Here, a Sufist, in total emergence with his higher spiritual ideals, and in total congruence and harmony with the imperceptible world his heart reaches, believes that this heart can be a gift to another human because giving is an ideal in itself expressing human unity and in it, lies the virtue of generosity and bountiful giving to maintain equality and brotherhood.

As a conclusion to this part, Rihani and Khalid adopt the position of a Dervish in the pursuance of a human unity of being, which is a fundamental Sufi concept that compels all people to envision the divine as uniting and to outgrow the petty and secondary political and religious diversities. This stream of thought would thus deliver Khalid from his anxiety of being intellectually and physically displaced.

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<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.* p.80.

## 2. Arab Nationalism

In the Book, Khalid affirms the fact that he longs for “the triumph of the Idea, the realization of a great dream: the rise of a great race who has fallen on evil days; the renaissance of Arabia; the reclaiming of her land; the resuscitation of her glory;--”<sup>221</sup>. Indeed, the protagonist aspires for the return of the old days of the Arab World, when an Arab Empire used to be dominant and was characterized by a strong and prosperous military, economic, and cultural achievements and powers. Although the term “Empire” can connote colonization and division among other small nations, and although it can also mean the dependency of other lands upon a higher monarchy or rule, which entails poverty and social retrogression, Rihani, in the words of Khalid, alluded to the positive facet of the achievements this Empire was able to reach, which does not entail neither Rihani nor Khalid encouraging any type of Imperialist tendencies. As a matter of fact, he revels in the old accomplishments of a united Arab World, and wishes for the resuscitation of these glorious feats. The idea of an Arab nationalism is recurrent in the book because through union and progress, the Arab world would be able to overcome its internal dismemberment and would, as a consequence, focus on the cause of Arabism and on how to promote it. As a part of the Christian communities in the Levant, Khalid raises high the flag of an Arab nation or what Rihani likes to call “the United States of Arabia” or (*Al Wilayat Al Mottahida Al Arabi'ya*) in order to highlight the linguistic and historical similarities of these territories, and to bring to the fore an identity based on the common language rather than on religion. Hajjar writes: “Rihani’s deep appreciation of and pride in the Arabic cultural heritage led him to view it, religion aside, as a binding force for the whole Arab World”<sup>222</sup>. Indeed, Rihani denounces this confusion taking place between the terms Islamic World and Arab World. In fact, linking the union of a nation to a specific religion is quite anti-secular and does neither serve all the different religious denominations nor pay attention to the individualistic and human aspects of citizens. Dr Nijmeh Hajjar explains:

Rihani insisted on embracing this identity to counter his feeling of insecurity as a Christian Lebanese in the heart of the Arab world and to avoid the loss of distinctiveness as an Arab citizen of the world. Rihani’s loyalty to the smaller circle, born of love of Lebanon, his

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<sup>221</sup> Rihani, Ameen. *The Book of Khalid*. Dodd, Mead, and Co. 1911. p. 274-275.

<sup>222</sup> Hajjar, Nijmeh. “Ameen Rihani’s Humanist Vision of Arab Nationalism”. In, Nathan C & Sitka, Betty J. (Eds). *Ameen Rihani: Bridging East and West, A Pioneering Call for Arab-American Understanding*. University Press of America, Inc. 2004.p.138.



country of birth, in no way contradicted his loyalty to the greater Arab homeland and his dedication to serve his people and all humankind.<sup>223</sup>

Here, it could be understood that both Khalid and Rihani focused on a humanist vision of Arabism –not related to the Islamic religion whatsoever— in order to vanquish the internal schisms of Christian individuals who are Levantine Arabs by birth and by culture, and who represent a vital part of the Arab communities exactly like their Muslim compatriots. According to Hajjar “Rihani acknowledged the Islamic dimension of the Arab culture, which, he insisted, was upheld by Muslims as well as Christians”<sup>224</sup>. Thus, the remedy for an ailed, Ottoman Arab World is to regain its pride in its Arab identity and discard religious categorizations. Khalid’s feeling of exile emanates from many dimensions. He is the exile of America, the exile of his own native Lebanon, and the exile of an entire mindset that distinguishes between Muslims and Christians in the Arab Worlds, divides Arabs and Americans altogether, and is keen on dissecting the value of humanity. Thus, Khalid seeks to start by conquering this “awkwardness” vis-à-vis his position as a Maronite, then aims at integrating into an American society as an Arab, then, finally, intends to bind these polarities to achieve a humanist vision of himself and to bring forth a “globalized” world where all its components come closer and communicate faster by virtue of a creed that prioritizes humanity.

In this respect, *the book of Khalid* takes part of the literature of exile for it implicitly handles its causes and finds its solutions through the psychology and the experience of its protagonist. Khalid has a firm belief that the solution to outgrowing exclusion grows in the mind, and is nurtured by tolerance, peace, secularism, and not by simply bridging East and West, but by venerating the human nationality.

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<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* p. 134.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.* p.138

# Conclusion

“Exile is of course as old as written history and as an experience probably as old as existence itself. The very sound of the word exile has embedded with it aural resonances of the primary human conditions of existence, experience, expulsion and excommunication”.<sup>225</sup>In his introduction, Patrick Ward evaluates the condition of exile and considers it to be a part of the human agitated personality, who is in perpetual search for a home in the metaphorical sense of the word. Exile is not a sudden change in a Man’s life as long as he or she embodies the eternal search for an answer, a satisfying truth, or for a justification for constant psychological strife. In *the Book of Khalid*, Rihani treats this quest for reform in both the United States and Greater Syria through the gradual changes that Khalid is subjected to throughout his East-West adventure. Indeed, the writer depicts the exilic nature of the hero by contemplating and analyzing the latter’s vision for his native country and for America, where he appropriated and discovered a new facet of his identity; the identity that doubled with experience and was enriched thanks to Khalid’s insight, philosophy, and sense of pursuit. Moreover, Rihani’s treatment of exile does not take place through the portrayal of a “classic” immigration story. In fact, in this context, the act of immigrating only functions as a basic layer on which the psychological, spiritual, and intellectual exile later resurfaces. The hypodiegetic nature of the book paves the way for the researcher to understand that this story cannot be analyzed based only on the experience of emigration. Although migrating is the direct cause for Khalid’s estrangement, it is not the most important factor that leads to it, for he eventually comes home, and the feeling persists despite quenching his thirst for his “physical” home in Mount Lebanon. Yet, his yearning for an intellectual evolution never extinguishes. Through Khalid’s complex character, it could be understood that exile is weaved in a multilayered form. If it could be analyzed on a structural level, we can conclude that it takes several steps until it reaches a climax in which Khalid finds himself persecuted and rejected from family, religious and political institutions, and the frame of space-time as a whole. Indeed, because Khalid realizes, in the end, that he can no longer sustain his efforts to introduce the ideas proliferating from his revolutionary mindset, he eventually sinks

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<sup>225</sup> Ward, Patrick. *Exile, Emigration, and Irish Writing*. Irish Academic Press. 2002. Dublin. P. xi.

into the oblivion of the desert and disappears. Exile in the book starts on geographical grounds. However, it later ascends to inhabit the body and the mind. It escalates while crescendoing from the soil till it finally penetrates the mind and spirit. This movement exile takes intensifies by reading a chapter after another, and still, it never seems to reach an end, considering the disturbing ending of Khalid's complicated mission. Exile does not come to a halt, whereas the hero's determination does, manifested in an unexplained act of surrender. It is not clear if Khalid willingly abandoned his fervor to fight his battles, or simply was too heartbroken and tired to finish what he had started. Or maybe, it could be noticed, that this act of disappearance is Khalid's idea of a good standing ovation for his readers, expressing his interminable position as an exile. Although *the Book of Khalid* is not considered a biographical literary production, Khalid's personality is said to highly resemble Ameen Rihani's. In a televised interview<sup>226</sup> that aired on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, on *Al Mayadeen* --which is a well-known Middle-Eastern channel featuring the area's ongoing political, cultural, and social news-- Ameen Albert Rihani, the author's nephew, who is also a writer and a an Arab-American Literature professor at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, was invited to appear on a television show called *Ajras Al Machriq* or the "Church Bells of the East"—a cultural show presented by *Ghassan Al Shami* and generally hosting specialists and scholars specialized in Arab-Christian affairs-- in order to pay tribute to Rihani's legacy, especially through his first Arab-American novel: *the Book of Khalid*. During the interview, He mainly referred to resemblances between Khalid and Rihani on the level of their personal experiences. Indeed, both left to the United States at an early age and returned eventually to Lebanon with a mind imbued with both Eastern and Western values. Also, Rihani and Khalid shared the same political zeal for they both sought to overthrow the despotic Ottoman rule by disseminating their respective opinions about the politically stagnant East. On the Arab nationalist level, both Rihani/ Khalid held that if America was able to achieve its independence and unity in spite of all previous obstacles, the Arab World can perceive its example as a role model. Besides, in the early 1920s, Rihani had great faith in Woodrow Wilson's famous Fourteen Points, among them the right of peoples to self-determination and to legitimate and honorable goals for independence from

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<sup>226</sup> Interview with Ameen Albert Rihani" *Ajras Al Machriq*. Beirut: Al Mayadeen, 2015. Web. 17 May 2015 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWJgSEG-g5Y>

imperialist powers. Furthermore, according to Professor A.A Rihani, Rihani's philosophical doctrine can be summarized in reason, freedom, truth, East, West, the spiritual, and the material. Indeed, Khalid's entire life was surrounded by these concepts whether through his experience as an exilic subject, or through his venture to create a type of reasoning by which to conquer it and become a citizen of the world. Finally, both Rihani and his fictional hero maintained that reform has its conditions: Metamorphosing the spirit in order to reform the individual, which leads to the gradual and larger reform of society and the nation as a whole. Rihani never strayed from his path towards concretizing a humanistic outlook for Pan-Arabism. According to A.A Rihani, the author believed in a "United States of Arabia" that prioritizes Arab citizenship and omits religion from its system, whether Christianity, Islam, or Judaism. Basically, the interview highlighted Rihani's avant-gardist insight, intricately embedded in the book, and demonstrated its contrast to the modern-day Arab World that suffers from continuous retrogression caused by terrorism and confessionalism.

Thus, Rihani was not alone when he decided to illustrate the reforming function of exile through Khalid. He was also taking part in the Pen League along with Khalil Gibran and Mikhail Naimy. These three were called "the prophets of New York". They worked together on enhancing the Arab individual's mind through their respective literary productions in Arabic and in English. These Lebanese philosophers were inaugurated as the literary ambassadors for the Arab World, and strove through work and travel to connect the Arab and the American individuals to a more spiritual and democratic sense of self. Although the Pen League longed for and built the edifices of a humanistic nationalism in its literary productions, the current "Middle East" unfortunately demonstrates antagonistic political and social turmoil, shattering, thus, the dreams of these enlighteners for union, especially with the daily onslaughts of sectarian divisions, and the increase of the number of Syrian/Iraqi refugees looking for a world of peace that would embrace them, creating thus a new form of exile.



Annex 1: A Map of Greater Syria



Annex 2: Ameen Al Rihani

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